THE

RISE AND PROGRESS

OF

BRITISH OPIUM SMUGGLING:

THE

ILLEGALITY OF THE EAST INDIA COMPANY'S MONOPOLY OF THE DRUG;

AND

ITS INJURIOUS EFFECTS UPON INDIA, CHINA, AND THE COMMERCE OF GREAT BRITAIN.

Five Letters

ADDRESSED TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE THE EARL OF SHAFTESBURY.

BY

MAJOR-GENERAL R. ALEXANDER,

MADRAS ARMY.

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LETTER I.

THE INSTITUTION OF THE OPIUM MONOPOLY, AND ITS EFFECTS UPON INDIA.

My Lord,

More than a year has elapsed since a few gentlemen met in your Lordship's presence, to consider the representations which have been so frequently and forcibly made, regarding the progress, extent, and evils of the contraband trade in opium carried on by British subjects at the principal ports and along the sea-coast of China.

Many facts were then stated and authenticated; but it was felt that information on the subject must be collected and presented to the public in a manner as concise as is compatible with a full apprehension of the injury that is inflicted by means of this illegal traffic on the population of China, on the commerce of Great Britain, on the morality and prosperity of the subjects of both nations, and—though last mentioned, what is first in importance and paramount to all—on the spread of true religion and the blessings of civilization that follow in its train.

My Lord, I have no higher ambition in now venturing to address you, than to collate these facts and

information, with the hope that in so doing, I may be permitted to submit an humble foundation for measures which the statesmen and philanthropists of our country will see fit to adopt, in justice to our national character, and in compassion to a people comprising one-third of the family of man. I shall use the privilege of quoting freely, with or without acknowledgment, and generally *verbatim et literatim*, whatever I may find necessary to my purpose of presenting a clear narrative of facts in the plain language of truth.

Beginning with India, I find that previous to the year 1767, the quantity of opium exported from thence did not exceed 200 chests yearly—the trade was carried on by the Portuguese in a legal manner, and the drug, imported from Turkey, was admitted as a medicine through the Custom-house in China by payment of a duty equal to 13s. English money on the 100lbs. In the year 1773, the East India Company, acting upon the suggestion of a member of their Council in Calcutta, entered upon this traffic and established a depot for opium in vessels anchored in a bay to the south-west of Macao. The trade so conducted does not appear to have been profitable, nor did opium become a source of revenue to the Company until, as well as I can trace, about the year 1798, or 1800; it seems that about that period they ceased to be exporters, and had by fiscal measures secured a rigidly guarded monopoly of production in India; they thus not only relieved themselves from the risks of commerce, but were better prepared to steer a devious course through the political embarrassments,

which it may be presumed, were foreseen as an inevitable consequence of forcing upon the unwilling government of China an importation, against which remonstrances, or resistance by force of arms, have since proved equally unavailing. It was part of the astute policy of the Company, strictly to prohibit the captains and officers of their own ships from trading in the drug, or allowing it to be received on board their vessels; they were not to be caught *flagrante delicto*, and it devolved upon diplomacy to answer "Not guilty," to nullify the evidence of complicity, and screen its principal from the responsibility of being an accessory before the fact: while on the other hand, in the licenses granted for private ships trading to China, there is a provision with penalty attached, that no opium except that which the East India Company monopolizes shall be taken on board.*

A reference to the code of Regulations for the Bengal Presidency shows that the first legislative enactment for restraining illicit trade in opium was passed in the year 1795, and by its preamble, proves that as the government grasped at monopoly, an antagonistic principle devolved itself in the smuggling, which had come into existence since the year 1767, when the commerce, openly carried on by the Portuguese, was legal both in India and China.

From the year 1795 until the year 1816, successive laws were enacted by the government in Bengal, prohibiting the importation of the drug from the sur-

* *Vide* Appendix to Report of a Committee of the House of Common on the trade with China. 1840. Pp. 176—177.

rounding Independent States; laying down rules for the guidance of parties concerned in providing opium for the government; repressing the growth in some provinces, fostering it in others, and passing more stringent regulations for the repression of an increasing illicit trade. In the last-named year, these laws were embodied in Regulation XIII., and opium legislation arrived at the state in which it is at the present day; codified in an Act containing ninety-eight sections, sixty-eight of which have direct reference to the penalties to be inflicted on transgressors of the monopoly; to legal processes peculiar to its circumstances; to punishment for frauds, oppression, and perjury; and to rewards for informers; while the other sections grant authority to opium agents, and are more generally declaratory and supportive of the system.

If a nation's laws are to be taken as an index to the morality and civilization of its people, and to the state of crime which especially calls for repression, the whole tenor of this enactment bears testimony to the evils that have been inflicted upon the population of India by the growth of the opium monopoly. The zeal of the loyal subject, the cupidity of the informer, and the fears of the timid are excited to the utmost, while the notorious profligacy and oppression of an Indian police are recognized as existing, by penal clauses which all experience proves to have been hitherto ineffectual for the protection of the people. In illustration of this, I will quote some sections of the above regulation XIII. of 1816, marking in italics the passages to which I would call particular attention.

"Sect. XIV. In the event of the cultivator failing to deliver the full quantity of opium agreed for by him in the manner specified in Sect. XI.; if the agent shall *suspect* or *believe* the cause of failure to be in the wilful neglect of the ryot, he shall complain to the zillah, or city judge, within whose jurisdiction the land of the ryot may be situated; and if it shall be proved to the satisfaction of the judge that the failure has been owing *to neglect*, he is to award that the ryot shall restore the proportional advance with interest, at the rate of 12 per cent. per annum. The ryot so failing to fulfil his contract shall likewise be liable, *at the discretion of the judge*, to a further penalty, not exceeding the amount of interest, to the payment of which he will be liable under the above provision."

Need I remind your Lordship of the world-wide character of Indian police and informers? and of what might be the consequences to a helpless ryot if *suspicion* or *belief* should be instilled into the mind of a man of ordinary capacity or more than ordinary susceptibility, supported by that false evidence which it is the curse of India to find everywhere procurable? On this subject I need but refer generally to the Report of the Commissioners appointed to inquire into the question of torture at Madras.

"Sect. XXXII. All zemindars, talookdars, and other proprietors of lands, whether malguzary or lakheraj, all sudder farmers, and under-renters of land of every description, all dependent talookdars, all naibs, gomastahs, and other local agents, all sezawuls, all tehsildars, and other native officers employed in the collection of revenue and rents of lands on the part of the Government or Court of Wards, are hereby declared *accountable for giving the earliest information* to the police, or abkarry darogah, to the magistrates, collectors of revenue, or officers in charge of the abkarry mehaul, collectors of customs, opium agents, or their deputies, of all poppy which may be illegally cultivated within the limits of the estate or farm held or managed by them.

"Sect. XXXIII. Any landholders, or other descriptions of persons above noticed, to whom *such responsibility is declared to attach*, who

may *wilfully or knowingly neglect* to give the information hereby required to the nearest police, or abkarry darogah, the magistrate, the collector of land revenue, or officer in charge of the abkarry mehaul, the collector of Government customs, the superintendent of salt chokies, the opium agent or his deputy assistant, shall, on proof of such *neglect* before the collector of the land revenue, or other officer in charge of the abkarry mehaul, be liable to the penalty,* with the exception of imprisonment, stated in Sect. XXXI.; for whatever quantity of land shall be illegally cultivated with the poppy on their respective estates or farms, or on the lands under their management, unless it shall have been so cultivated without their knowledge or connivance.

"Sect. XXXIV. All native officers of Government, of *whatever description*, are hereby strictly enjoined, under pain of dismission from office *and such punishment as shall be specially prescribed*, to give immediate information to the authority under whom they are placed, of all poppy which may be illegally cultivated within their knowledge."

Is it too much to affirm that such legislation as this can find no parallel under the British crown? The legal net is so constructed that there is no escape for landowner, renter, agent, farmer, or officer of Government in any of its departments; espionage and inquisitorial search are evoked and pushed into all the social relations of the people; neglect is constituted into positive crime, and may be adduced as a charge against a cultivator when the seasons or unavoidable circumstances have proved adverse to his crops; there is a power of "punishing specially" without definition or limit; no allowance is made for an absentee landowner or tenant; ignorance or indiscrimination renders

* *i.e.* To a fine of twenty sicca rupees per begah for whatever quantity of land shall have been so cultivated, and the destruction of the plants if the opium has not been extracted; if the opium shall have been extracted and not seized, then the fine shall be thirty-two sicca rupees; and in addition to the above penalties, the offender shall be liable to six months' imprisonment if the fine is paid, and to a year's if it is not.

any one liable to the *suspicion* of knowledge or connivance, which, if not disproved, subjects him to severe punishment; and all this train of evil may be set in motion by police and Abkarry Darogahs and officials, than whom, the merest tyro in India administration can inform your Lordship, there is not a more false or corrupt set of beings upon earth.

By Sect. XLV., a person to whom any quantity of contraband opium may have been given or sold, is liable to a fine of 500 rupees, at the discretion of the officer, whose merit with the Goverment is to raise the opium revenue.

Prohibitions, fines, imprisonments, and confiscations by summary jurisdiction, meet at every turn the inhabitant of a district in which the growth of poppy may be legalized; nor may a person relinquish the purchased privilege of vending opium until, under the provisions of Sect. LXVI., " he has paid to the collector a sum equal to the daily tax of one month, over and above the amount payable by him in the ordinary course, under the engagements contracted with the collector, or other officer in charge of the Abkarry Mehaul, up to the date of the resignation of his license.

The zeal of officials in stimulating the use of opium is excited by a commission of five per cent on the net amount realised by them on its sale, *vide* Sect. LXIX.

I must add one more reference to the Regulation which provides so freely for fines to the *amount of, and exeeeding* 500 *rupees,* and imprisonment for even trivial infractions of its rules. Of all the oppressive

acts of Indian police, perhaps none is more common than that of dragging an innocent man from his home and business, to answer a false accusation at a distant court. If this very usual tyranny should be inflicted under the provisions of the Opium Law, the imprisoned victim, "who, after the investigation prescribed by these rules, shall not have been convicted of the offence with which he stood *charged* or *suspected*, shall be immediately released, and the expense to which he had been actually subject on account of the inquiry, shall be paid to him by the collector or other officer in charge of the Abkarry Mehaul *on the part of Government;* should it further appear that the inquiry originated in malice or in motives clearly vexatious and unwarranted on the side of the informant, it shall be competent for the collector or other aforesaid officer to order such informant to discharge the amount of any diet money which may have been paid to the witnesses, and to pay to the party aggrieved such moderate fine, *not exceeding twenty rupees,* as may appear reasonable, or to be confined for a period not exceeding fifteen days."

Here there is no hypothetical legislation against merely imaginary grievance; the judge is the officer, whose sense of public duty is engaged in favour of a rigid execution of the law under which a man is arraigned, on possibly no other ground than suspicion without distinct evidence; if the "*suspicion*" which is, legally marked as distinct from "*a charge,*" be not converted into fact, and if the informant has acted as informants in such cases too often, and in general do

act, from "malicious, vexatious, and unwarranted motives," and the almost impossible proof of a motive, or disproof of a suspicion has been substantiated, then the gratification of revenge, or the risk run for reward, is to be estimated by the small amount of payment of diet money to defendant's witnesses (the informant's evidence being as usual, or in all probability, his accomplices), and the comparative slight punishment to which his guilt is amenable.

Opium is manufactured in Malwa, one of what are termed the Independent States of India; the Native Government does not interfere with the cultivation of the poppy, which the ryots are at liberty to grow as they do rice, grain, or any other produce; if, however, Malwa opium could be brought into the export market at a merely remunerative price to the grower and manufacturer, it is obvious that high prices in Calcutta could not be maintained against competition in Western India. But as Malwa opium cannot reach a seaport without passing through the territories of the East India Company, the paramount power of the latter secures its own monopoly price, by the simple protectionist expedient of imposing a transit duty of 400 rupees upon every chest of opium, and the enactment of a law of confiscation of the property, and heavy penalties of fine against the smuggler, for whose enterprise such high stimulant is created by large profits upon his illicit trade; the transit duty has gradually been increased from 100 rupees a chest, and is, of course, liable to be advanced as the interest of the East India Company may require.

In a statistical paper, printed for the Court of Directors of the East India Company in 1853, the first words are, "In Bengal the revenue from opium is realised by means of a Government monopoly;" and almost immediately thereupon follow these sentences:—"The ordinary consequences of monopoly, increase of price to the consumer and restriction on the employment of capital and industry, are not wanting in the opium system; the free cultivation of the poppy would doubtless lead to the larger outlay of capital, and to greater economy of production." It is a pity for India, my Lord, that so sound and simple an axiom in political economy has ever been departed from, and that now the consequences of such departure from right principle have evolved those evils which render retrogressive measures imperatively necessary.

So completely is the production of opium in the hands of the East India Company, that not a poppy can be grown in the extent of their vast territories without either the permission of the Government or infraction of its laws. In Bengal only is the growth allowed, and it is there carried on and the opium collected under the management of two principal agencies, at the head of which are officers, who, to judge from the largeness of their salaries and extent of their powers, must stand high in the confidence of the authorities by whom they are appointed. Under the opium agents is an immense staff of officials, whose designations would be unintelligible to a mere European reader, and whose multifarious duties

extend from making the advances of money to the cultivators before the poppy-seed is sown; watching its growth and produce within the strictly-defined boundaries of cultivation; the delivery of opium at the appointed places: its inspissation and preparation for the taste of the Chinese consumers: its formation into balls, and packages in chests especially adapted to the convenience of smuggling: and finally to its conveyance to Calcutta, where it is put up to auction at the Government sales, and passes from the hands of the officers of the State into those of the speculators in illicit trade, and the daring contrabandists who land it in China.

Another injury done to India by this monopoly is to be found in the poverty of the ryots, by whom the rich opium producing lands are cultivated; to them the poppy fields yield but a bare subsistence, while the profit upon opium, which ranges as the difference between 250 rupees and from 1200 to 1600 rupees a chest, goes to the Government, which exchanges the drug for silver at the auction mart; if this profit, or a fair portion of it, was realised by the ryots, they would become capitalists, and consumers of British manufactures; and if the profit was derived from sugar, indigo, cotton, or products for which these richest of all lands are best adapted, there would be an abundant supply of raw material for the purposes of reciprocally beneficial commerce between the two countries.

There is a fallacy connected with the opium monopoly and Abkaree system of India, which, while

it is allowed to operate, must prove more and more destructive to the social and commercial prosperity of the people. As long as revenue is raised from, and the respectability of legal sanction given to, the principal causes of crime and misery; as long as capital is invited to be embarked in the sale of ardent spirits, opium, and intoxicating drugs, under the safe-guard of Government contracts for monopolies, and protection of penal laws in their support, so will intoxication in its different forms, continue to spread, as it has spread, among millions, who, before they were thus demoralized, were to be classed among the most sober, and generally abstemious people upon earth. This is not the place to enter upon such a subject *in extenso,* nor will I do more than suggest that if the revenue derived from the Abkaree system and opium monopoly, was balanced with the expenses of crime, disease, and idleness, as well as of misdirection of capital, and loss of productive power consequent thereupon, there is an appalling amount to be carried to the account of moral deterioration and material loss. With strict relevance, however, to the opium question, let me quote, first, the report of Mr. C. A. Bruce, Superintendent of the tea-plantation in Assam, and then the opinions of two other authorities of the highest order. Mr. Bruce's words are,—

"I might here observe that the British Government would confer a lasting blessing on the Assamese and the New Settlers, if immediate and active measures were taken to put down the cultivation of opium in Assam, and afterwards to stop its importation, by levying high duties on opium land. If something of this kind is not done, and done quickly too, the thousands that are about to emigrate from the plains into Assam will soon be infected with the

opium mania; *that dreadful plague* which has depopulated this beautiful country, turned it into a land of wild beasts, with which it is overrun, and has degenerated the Assamese from a fine race of people, to the most abject, servile, crafty, and demoralized race in India.

"This vile drug has kept, and does now keep, down the population; the women have fewer children compared with those of other countries, and the children seldom live to become old men, but in general die at manhood; very few old men being seen in this unfortunate country in comparison with others. Few but those who have resided long in this unhappy country know the dreadful and immoral effects which the use of opium produces on the native. He will steal, sell his property, his children, the mother of his children, and finally even commit murder for it. Would it not be the highest of blessings, if our humane and enlightened government would stop these evils by a single dash of the pen, and save Assam, and all those who are about to emigrate into it as tea-cultivators, from the dreadful results attendant on the habitual use of opium? We should in the end be richly rewarded, by having a fine healthy race of men growing up for our plantations, to fell our forests, to clear the land from jungle and wild beasts, and to plant and cultivate the luxury of the world. This can never be effected by the enfeebled opium-eaters of Assam, who are more effeminate than women. I have dwelt thus long on the subject, thinking it one of great importance, as it will affect our future prospects with regard to tea; also from a wish to benefit this people, and save those who are coming here from catching the plague, by our using timely means of prevention."

This official report receives confirmation from a letter received from a gentleman also holding an official situation under the East India Company in Assam. His allusion being only casual, is the more striking:—

"The cultivation of opium is free in Assam; the fearful results from its use, which every day present themselves to notice, are very painful to witness."

Mr. Henry St. George Tucker, Deputy-Chairman

of the East India Company, protested against the whole of the traffic, in a minute of dissent dated October 1839, and has left on record, that,

"By promoting the growth of the poppy throughout central India, as we have done, we become accessory to the probable extension of a pernicious habit among a race of men whose well-being ought never to be an object of indifference to us."

And the late Sir Stamford Raffles thus wrote of the evil, which has fearfully increased since his day:—

"The use of opium, it must be confessed and lamented, has struck deep into the habits, and extended its malignant influence to the morals of the people, and it is likely to perpetuate its power in degrading their character, and enervating their energies, as long as the European Government, overlooking every consideration of policy and humanity, shall allow a paltry addition to their finances to outweigh all regard to the ultimate happiness and prosperity of the country."

To these I will add the testimony of the late Lord Jocelyn, who, having visited the opium-shops and smoking dens in the East, stated in Parliament,

"He must acknowledge that the noble Lord (Ashley) had called to his recollection scenes which he had witnessed of the lawless character of the trade; and that, in all he stated as to the moral, political and physical evils, he concurred."

The following extract of authentic, and official authority, on the subject, is so apposite, that, as I find, so I quote it:—

"The produce of this delicate plant, the poppy, is extremely uncertain, being liable to frequent injury from insects, wind, hail, frost, and unseasonable rain. To the poor man *the advance is the chief inducement.* He takes it at first, perhaps, to obtain a sum of money when

urgently wanted; and having once become dependent upon this assistance at a particular season of the year (as he barely ekes out enough from his laborious occupation to pay his expenses), *necessity* compels him to continue the cultivation. Only a small proportion of the amount paid by the Government reaches the hands of the actual cultivator. It is stated by Langford Kennedy, assistant opium agent at Patna, and opium agent at Behar, from 1811 to 1829, in his evidence before the Committee of the House of Commons in 1832, Nos. 721 and 722, that, 'advances were made by him to the gomastah, by the gomastah to the suddor mattoo, by the suddor mattoo to the village mattoo, and by the village mattoo to the ryot;' and he adds, No. 757, 'the gomastah obtains a further income by a species of extortion,' which must ultimately fall on the unfortunate ryot.

"It is the interest of the deputy opium agent, who always did get, and, in some instances, still gets, a commission on the Government profits, to collect as much opium as possible. He is generally the collector and magistrate of the district, possessing great power, and from his situation, almost unbounded influence over the natives, which it is not unfair to suppose he would exercise to promote the extended production of the drug: in doing this, he would not only benefit himself, but be acting in strict conformity with the instructions of his employers. Moreover, the boundaries of land in some districts are extremely ill defined, and disputes often arise as to who is the rightful occupant. It frequently happens in such cases that one of the disputants offers to grow poppy, and a decision in his favour is the almost invariable consequence.

"The statements contained in the last paragraph have been confirmed to me in the strongest manner by an eye-witness, Mr. Andrew Sym, who resided eleven years at Gorakhpoer, and for about eighteen months of that time had charge of the East India Company's branch opium agency for that district. This gentleman, who has recently returned from India, has permitted me to use the authority of his name.

"Other and grievous sources of oppression, arising from the surveillance of the custom-house searchers, and the extortions of the officers of the chokees, or search-houses, are forcibly detailed in the following letter, written by a gentleman of my acquaintance, who, from long residence in the interior of India, possesses an intimate knowledge of the subject on which he writes; this letter, though long, will amply repay the perusal:—

" 'The evils which the cultivation of opium entails upon our fellow-subjects in India arises partly from the ryots in the opium districts of Patna and Benares being compelled to give up fixed portions of their lands for the production of poppy. It is true that the Honourable Company pay fairly for the lands and labour thus wrested from the ryot (farmer); and did the amount paid by the government find its way honestly into the possession of these people, there might not be so much cause of complaint in this matter; but the contrary is the case. These payments have to pass through the hands of numerous *employés* of the Government; and scace twenty per cent. of it ever reaches the legitimate owner. The evils of the cultivation, however, do not end here. In consequence of being obliged *forcibly* to cultivate this highly-taxed drug, the peasant is constantly exposed to a suspicion of retaining some part of the produce for sale; the surveillance of the police is, therefore, especially directed to these unhappy creatures; and the oppressions which they are subjected to in this way surpass belief. They are exposed to every sort of annoyance which the ingenuity of authorised plunderers (the police and custom-house searchers) can devise, in order to extort bribes. The privacy of their miserable abodes—the sanctity of their females—is intruded upon by these harpies of Government; and no redress can be given by the Government, unless they abolish the production of this accursed drug.

" 'The evils arising from Government's trade in opium to the people of Bengal, Behar, and Benares arises from the necessary protection against the smuggling of this article of monopoly, and the right of search given to the custom-house officers, who are placed in search-houses, or chokees, at short distances along the bank of that main artery of Indian trade—the Ganges, and allow no native boat to pass, without bringing it to, for search. Before I proceed further in this branch of the subject, I had better give some insight into the character of the natives employed in these search-houses. They consist of peons (pay ten shillings per month,) ameens (twenty-four,) and writers (fourteen.) The writer is generally the more respectable personage of the three; he has charge of the rest; his pay is seven rupees per month; his qualification is a knowledge of the Persian language. He finds his own stationery, which costs him two rupees per month, leaving five rupees for himself. He has to give security for good behaviour, to the amount of five hundred rupees (50*l.*) The five rupees which remain of his salary are not sufficient to provide him

with food. Yet these men generally live expensively (that is to say, for natives,) and save money. Were there nothing beyond the authorised emolument of the situation above-mentioned, it is obvious that it would be impossible to get any one to accept such places. Yet large sums are paid, as bribes, to those who are supposed to have power with the European collector, in order to procure them. The natural consequence is, that feelings of honesty and morality are thrown aside, as incompatible with *employés* in the customs. In other departments, in judicial offices, in the revenue, and even in the police, honest native officers have been found, notwithstanding the British Indian system (which seems as if it were devised with the view of offering temptation to natives in authority to be dishonest); but, *in the customs*, I never met with an honest native. Those who are employed enter it with the sole intention of doing the best they can for themselves. Therefore, the bribery and perjury, apparent and acknowledged in the system, is most lamentable.

" 'I have already said, that the right of search is intrusted to characters such as I have described. Therefore, all goods passing the main artery of India—the Ganges—are exposed to it. Now this right is not in any way used to protect the Government; it is held out by the custom-house officers as a means of extorting bribes. This tax upon goods is made in every search-house established along the line they have to travel. Nor are merchant boats alone subjected to these extortions. They fall heavily upon mere travellers—especially pilgrims, and those who travel with their families. The latter usually have a separate apartment for their wives, sisters, and other females, which the officers threaten to enter, under the pretext of suspecting that opium is concealed there; and we know that a respectable Hindoo would sacrifice all he has in the world rather than expose his wives to insult from these miscreant searchers.

" 'The same system of extortion exists upon goods and persons conveyed by land whenever they come within the limits of inland custom-houses.

" 'To sum up the curse consequent on *this right of search, which springs from the Government trade in opium*, I may say they are as follows:—The exactions and corruptions; the grevious delay; the insolent exercise of low, ill-paid authority; the interruption of communication, by shutting up ferries, roads, and routes; the distress and ruin resulting from false seizures and confiscations (got up by the custom-house people to blind the Government); the diversion of trade

into channels less impeded; the advancement in price of all goods, by reason of these checks and annoyances; and, worst of all, the demoralization of the habits of all parties connected with, or exposed to the influence of, these oppressive and unjust measures. And we must either submit to all these evils and hindrances, the happiness and prospects, eternal as well as temporal, of the inhabitants of this large and wealthy tract of country, teeming with industry and fruitfulness, or annihilate the right of search, which, as it is exercised, is replete with every curse that can be inflicted on millions of our unoffending fellow-creatures, whom, by the laws of God and man, we are bound in every way to protect and comfort.'

"But a still greater evil than the oppression of the natives, is the RAPID DEMORALIZATION OF THE VAST POPULATION OF INDIA, FROM THE GROWING HABIT OF OPIUM-EATING. Even the Hindoos, said to be the most temperate people in the world, have caught the mania. I must again refer the reader to the letters from Assam, p. 19, and request him to reperuse the harrowing statement of Bruce; but these distressing effects are not confined to that province. In a written communication received from Mr. A. Sym, dated the 13th March, 1840, he states,—

"'The health and morals of the people suffer from the production of opium. Wherever opium is grown, it is eaten, and the more it is grown the more it is eaten; this is one of the worst features of the opium question. We are demoralizing our own subjects in India; ONE-HALF OF THE CRIME IN THE OPIUM DISTRICTS, MURDERS, RAPES, AND AFFRAYS, HAVE THEIR ORIGIN IN OPIUM-EATING.

"'Both Hindoos and Musselmen eat the drug; and its pernicious effects are visible on the population of the opium districts, particularly in the neighbourhoods of the depôts.'

"It is important to remember that this gentleman speaks of what he has actually seen, during a long residence in the opium districts. He assured me that all the other evils of the opium trade, as far as India was concerned, sink into insignificance, compared with the debasing effect upon the population; he added this remarkable expression,—'ONE OPIUM-CULTIVATOR DEMORALIZES A WHOLE VILLAGE!' Comment upon this is superfluous.

"THUS THOUSANDS OF OUR FELLOW-CREATURES IN INDIA ARE OPPRESSED, AND THEIR HEALTH AND MORALS DESTROYED, FOR THE SAKE OF THIS 'INFERNAL OPIUM TRADE.'"

Before leaving this part of my subject, I will state the result of my own experience of the progressive and destructive course of intoxication by opium, drugs, and ardent spirits, for corroboration of which I can confidently appeal to almost every civil and military officer, and missionary throughout India. The returns of courts-martial and defaulter-books of the Madras army will show that the character of the Sepoy is now tarnished by that vice, which is the one dark stain on the military superiority which his European comrade bears over every other soldier in the world. I have heard judges, magistrates, and collectors, bear their testimonies to the rapid deterioration of the native character in this respect, which is more authoritatively proved by the records of their courts and offices. Families feel it in their drunken servants, and missionaries deplore it as an increasing obstacle to the progress of the Gospel. During the wars in Afghanistan and the Punjab, when it became necessary to increase the native army, it fell under my observation in the office which I then held as Adjutant-general of the Army, that the commanding officers of regiments represented very generally their inability to procure the desired proportion of Mahomedan recruits, who were reported to be numerically few, and physically inferior when compared with the Hindoos. This induced me to make inquiries, not only from our highly intelligent officers themselves and other Europeans, but among the Mahomedans of all ranks, civil and military, and I was much struck with a fact that has also excited European attention, viz.

that the race is apparently wasting away. The Mahomedans universally acknowledged the fact, and accounted for it in various ways, *but in every instance adduced the use of opium* and *bhang** as one cause of the palpable diminution of the numbers and energies of their people.

I have the honour to be, &c.

R. ALEXANDER.

* The inspissated juice of hemp, used for intoxication, the sale of which is under monopoly purchased from the Government, and protected by penal laws.

LETTER II.

THE RISE, PROGRESS, AND CONSEQUENCES, OF OPIUM SMUGGLING IN CHINA.

My Lord,

I now turn to the progress of the contraband trade of opium in China.

Until the year 1800, opium was admitted through the custom-house as a medical drug. As I stated before, the quantity imported previous to the year 1767 had not exceeded 200 chests, weighing about 133 lbs. each chest; nor did the powerful East India Company enter upon the traffic until the year 1773, when they established a depot near Macao.

In 1781, the Bengal Government sent an armed vessel laden with opium to China, the proceeds of the sales of which were to be paid into the treasury of the East India Company at Canton; the price of the drug appears to have been then about £100 a chest.

In 1794 the Company stationed a large vessel laden with opium at Whampoa, the anchorage for the port of Canton; and, as I learn from the pamphlets and publications from which I am quoting, it was in

the year 1796 that the rapid progress of demoralization was so apprehended by the Chinese Government, that to arrest the vice it passed a law, that any one found guilty of smoking opium should be punished by being beaten with a bamboo, and exposed in the streets with a wooden collar round his neck, bearing an inscription of the crime for which he was condemned. Thus early were the Chinese alive to the consequences of the smuggling traffic, and, according to their customs and rules of government, energetic in their endeavours to suppress it.

The trade increased notwithstanding, and, in the year 1800, the importation reached to the number of 2000 chests. From this period may be traced that legislative and executive opposition of the Chinese Government which eventually drew down upon the nation the horrors of an unjust war, and the misery under which its millions of opium victims now suffer. Edicts were sent to the governors of provinces to take stringent measures to suppress the use of the poisonous drug; punishments were increased in severity against those who indulged in the destructive habit, even to the extent of banishment and confiscation of property; still the vice, introduced and stimulated by the English contrabandist, spread like a contagious disease, and the measures of the Chinese Government were counteracted by an aggravation of the evils inflicted upon the people; the custom-house and other officers at Whampoa and Macao were bribed into connivance at the trade which the Emperor was endeavouring to suppress, and the corruption

of the public authorities was added as a fatally necessary incident in the progress of national demoralization.

Previous measures having proved ineffectual, the Hong merchants, in the year 1809, were required to give security for every vessel that came to Whampoa, that she brought no opium, before she was permitted to open her hatches; and it was made known, that if opium was found on board any vessel, she should be sent away without being permitted to discharge her cargo, and the security-merchant should be punished. Both parties are seen at this period to be pursuing their objects with equal earnestness, but with different degrees of success. The Chinese Government, according to its laws and customs, endeavoured to suppress the traffic, which, nurtured by the East India Company, in the days when Free Trade was unknown, is gradually assuming gigantic strength and proportions. In 1820, the number of chests smuggled into China had increased to 5147; owing to some flagrant instances of crime having come to the knowledge of the Governor of Canton in 1821, when 7000 chests were imported, the senior Hong merchant was disgraced for remissness of duty, and more stringent measures were put in practice against the trade. At the same time, when the Chinese punished their own subjects for infraction of the laws, they addressed the most earnest remonstrances to the foreign merchants who instigated them to do so.

The only consequence, however, of this activity

on the part of the Chinese was, that the depots for opium were driven away from Whampoa and Macao, and permanently established in armed vessels, which lay at anchor under the island of Lin Tin, at the entrance of the Canton river. From these armed vessels the traffic was managed thus:—The foreign merchants resided in Macao or Canton. They received the money in payment of the drug at their counting-houses, and gave orders on the commanders of the store-ships at Lin Tin. The Chinese purchasers sent very fast boats, which were propelled by forty or fifty stout rowers well armed, to the ship to receive the opium, and smuggle it into Canton, or wherever it was wanted; and these deliveries were generally made at night, to avoid the observation of the officers of Government.

Under such circumstances of impotent legislation, disregarded remonstrances, and daring violation of the laws, the trade went on. In 1824, the importation was 12,639 chests, and in the next ten years it increased to 21,785. The insatiate craving of the Chinese grew with what it fed upon to their destruction, so that in 1837 there was a successful smuggling of 39,000 chests, valued at 25,000,000 dollars.

That the Chinese Government was sincere in its opposition to this contrabandism, is proved by the consistency of its edicts, and the ineffectual severity of its ill-executed laws. Charles Majoribanks, Esq., in his evidence given before the House of Commons in 1830, states "he did not imagine that the Chinese possessed any means of putting it down by any

marine force which they had; that the opium was forced upon Whampoa, where it was met by counteracting prohibitions and exactions of the Chinese Government, and that the trade, entirely prohibited by that Government, was compelled to take refuge among the islands at the mouth of the Canton river, where it was carried on to a very great extent." On being questioned another day, the same gentleman replied, "that the Chinese have frequently interposed by the strongest proclamations, and that he knew of some instances in which opium boats had been seized *and the heads of their crews were cut off.*"

Sir J. F. Davis, another able and experienced officer of the East India Company's service in China, was asked by the same Committee of the House of Commons whether the Chinese had issued many edicts against the opium traffic, and whether they had been carried into force. He answered, "they certainly have, to the utmost capability of the weak Chinese Government, which had rather evinced its hostility to the system than been effective in repressing it."

A reference to the Third Report of the Commons Committee on India Affairs in 1830, will show, that by dispatches from its factory in Canton, the East India Company was kept aware of the undeviating opposition of the Chinese Government, and of the difficulties in which the legal trade became involved by the pertinacity of the smugglers. The Emperor and his ministers avowedly acted upon moral principles, and rejected every suggestion to replenish their

treasury by a revenue that must accrue in proportion as the population became demoralized. About this time the low average price of a chest of opium may be taken at 700 dollars, and the annual importation, at the very moderate estimate of 22,000 chests. Had the Emperor consented to impose a duty of twenty-five per cent., there was a revenue to be derived of 3,850,000 dollars.

In 1837 we find the Chinese Government exerting all the vigour it possessed in issuing laws, edicts, proclamations, and remonstrances, and punishing with the greatest severity such of its own subjects as it could apprehend. At this period, therefore, the state of the affairs stood thus—the East India Company used its monopoly in India to produce any quantity of opium that could be smuggled into China. According to the evidence given before the House of Commons, and recorded in its Blue Books, this opium was not prepared for medical purposes, but solely to suit the taste of the Chinese consumers; it was packed expressly for the convenience of the smugglers, and sold by Government officers at Government sales in Calcutta, for the known purpose of being taken to China, there to be imported contrary to the laws of the empire. All this was done with the knowledge and by the authority of the Select Committee of the Court of Directors in Leadenhall Street, the connivance or command of the Board of Control, and carried practically into effect by the Supreme Government of India in Calcutta, with all the power of its legislative and executive

authority. So completely was the Indian Government identified with the trade, that when heavy losses were sustained in China, it bore its share thereof as shown by the following Government notification issued in Calcutta: "Shippers to China of opium purchased at the sales of January, February and March 1837, if the ship left before the 1st of August last will receive at the rate of 140 rupees per chest . . . . Upon opium of the sales of January, February and March 1837, shipped from this port to any port of the Straits, or Eastern Archipelago before the 1st of May last, nothing will now be paid; but if it shall hereafter be proved by the production of bills of lading, to the satisfaction of the Board of Customs, Salt and Opium, that any part of this opium has been sent on from Singapore, Malacca, or Pinang, to China," (alas poor China!) "before the 1st of January 1837, then the shippers thereof will receive the same amount per chest as all other shippers of opium of the said sales to China, viz., at the rate of 140 rupees per chest." Then follows other adjustments upon Profit and Loss, varying from 150 to 300 rupees per chest.

The British Government having thus intimately identified its interests with that of the smugglers, I will quote from a pamphlet published by Mr. Fry in 1840, some specimens of the way in which the latter carried on their part of the business:—

Extract from a Letter dated Macao, 14th June, 1839.

"The opium trade is not annihilated. It has only, as it were, changed hands. It has passed only from the established houses in

Canton, under whose management it has ever been conducted with the greatest moderation, and in the most orderly and quiet manner, to a class of men prepared to carry on the traffic at all hazards, to overcome all obstacles that may oppose their progress by weapons of war, and who for this purpose, at this time, both here, at Manilla, and Singapore, are fitting out vessels in such a manner as will defy all the naval power of China."

The above comes from a house extensively interested in the opium trade.

Extract of a Letter from a Gentleman at Macao to his Friend in London.

"The profit upon opium is at this time so immense, that people are tempted to continue smuggling it, although at a very great risk of life. Even now, notwithstanding the merchants have signed a paper declaring they would not bring any more opium to China, vessels, *armed to the teeth*, are employed along the coast, and actually forcing it into the country; one of them was attacked by a Chinese junk, two of the crew were killed, and about forty of the Chinese. To say nothing of the morality or immorality of the trade, I think it disreputable from the first introduction of it; and the manner in which it has lately been carried on is disgraceful in the highest degree. I consider all persons engaged in it, as much deserving any punishment the Chinese may choose to inflict, as the smuggler on our own coast is of that awarded him by the laws of England. *After so many warnings* they have no right to complain of the means used by the Chinese for the suppression."

From the Head of a Mercantile House.

"The smuggling trade, as now carried on, too closely approximates to murder, even to defend the morality of it; to fire upon parties who endeavour to stay them, or to sell opium to men who risk their heads for money, is neither a gentlemanly nor an honourable trade."

From a Correspondent in China.

"The Ann opium clipper having been up at a place called Tienpâh, in the neighbourhood of Amoy, had made arrangements with some shore-boats to deliver a quantity of opium; very fortunately she had

remained under way when a large junk came out upon her, propelled by oars, the wind being very light. This junk engaged the Ann for four and a half hours, when one of the Ann's guns burst and killed seven of her crew. Most fortunately the breeze by this time had freshened, which enabled the Ann to make sail and get away from the junk. The captain of the Ann said, that, had it fallen calm, he should have been boarded to a certainty.

"To show you that more of such occurrences may be expected, we conversed the other day with a gentleman just arrived from China, who informed us that, before he left Macao, he had been in company with four captains of opium vessels, who declared to him that they had fully made up their minds to attack and sink all that opposed them in any way whatever."

Extract from a Letter from Hong Kong, dated Oct. 9th, 1839.

(From the Head of a Mercantile House.)

"A report is afloat of another fight up the coast of four smuggling schooners and brigs, owned by the Portuguese of Manilla, but all commanded by *Englishmen*, and with some of the crews English, all were armed (one of them carrying long 18-pounders), having been attacked by the mandarin junks, which they beat off, and of which eventually they burnt five. The lives lost are not mentioned."

A merchant at Bombay wrote to this firm in London in December 1839, as follows:—

"The opium trade is carrying on with the greatest vigour. The Lady Grant, a clipper, left this in September with 700 chests, and was leaving Singapore for the coast of China, armed with twelve guns and a crew of fifty-five men: the Red Rover, a clipper, had passed Singapore with 1100 chests from Calcutta; a letter from —— of the Vansittart, dated from Hongkong, states that a vessel has just arrived from Calcutta, carrying eighteen guns and forty Europeans, besides her Lascar crew. Our last letter would inform you that the Bengal Government put up 6000 chests on 4th January. This is the answer Lord Auckland makes to Captain Elliott when he forwards expresses to him for assistance. From the following extract of a letter from the brother of the writer you will have a good idea of what is going on at Hongkong.

"'The opium trade is flourishing on the coast, and even at this anchorage 850 dollars is offered for it here, and 1200 dollars is said to be current on the coast. The Sir Edward Ryan has just arrived with a full cargo, and fully armed and manned by a set of desperate fellows, who burn and destroy everything that comes in the way of their disposing of their opium.

"Those parties who are now engaged in China in selling British manufactures and purchasing teas, and in no way connected with the opium traffic, now seeing clearly that their interests have all along been sacrificed to those of the opium party, will stand it no longer; for while their business was at a complete stand-still, and their constituents' interests at home sacrificed, the opium party were carrying on an enormous profitable trade.'"

The following, from a Hindoo, dated Calcutta, August 1839, is particularly forcible and striking:—

"The opium question is next treated by ———. If from what was before known in England one book has been published 'On the Iniquities of the Opium Trade,' there will be dozens when the people in England know as much of this trade as we now know. The latter circumstance I will relate myself. The Red Rover and Sir Edward Ryan lately arrived from China, and they have both sailed within these two or three days, the former with about one thousand chests, and the latter with about seven hundred chests of opium. The agents of the former are ———, and those of the latter are ———. They are armed to the teeth and well manned. They have thus sailed out of a British port, under the sanction of the British Government, with the avowed object of landing their opium, and selling it at all hazards on the east coast of China. Will it be hereafter believed that British merchants in the nineteenth century could, in the face of the world, without a cloak and without a blush, engage in such a nefarious and piratical adventure for the sordid love of pelf?"

In November, 1855, I received from a friend a letter, written by a gentleman of high character and position in society, who is unwilling that his name should be made public; no candid mind will, I presume, reject the facts stated, nor be blind to the

system with which they are connected; the information is as follows: "A vessel sailed out of the harbour in broad daylight, well manned, of the very finest build and rig which Aberdeen could furnish; built, launched, and equipped under the light of heaven, and before our eyes, and armed to the teeth with every implement of war—an opium smuggler for poor China! the schooner Vindex. She is about 160 tons, of clipper build, built for ———— of ————. A vessel of the same kind, named the Wild Dayrell, was launched from a building-yard at Cowes for the same trade, and as a companion for the Vindex. The Captain of the Vindex is an Englishman, and the officers and crew came down from London; but the Captain having gone to sea with the crew and found them inefficient, he brought the vessel back, and shipped a new company, officers and all. I am not aware that there is any secret in what I have told you, the thing has been done from the beginning quite openly."

This, my Lord, connects the doings of the present day with those of 1839, and I do not suppose that it would be difficult to complete the links of the chain, some of which would be afforded by one of the richest public Companies in London.

Authority for what follows is to be found in Blue books and official records, published in this country and in China.

In 1836, there had commenced one of the most remarkable consultations which are on record in the history of any nation. The Chinese Government

had been trying to suppress a destructive vice among its own people, and to put a stop to an iniquitous traffic in a contraband poison carried on by foreigners.

But its efforts had been nugatory. The armed smuggling continued, the fascinating vice was still spreading, and £500,000 sterling of silver were exported in payment of the drug; in such an extremity, some advisers of the Emperor thought it might be best to seek a remedy by legalizing the traffic. The most distinguished statesman who recommended this policy was Heu Naitsi, and as it was approved of by most of the foreign residents in China, many of the Chinese at Canton thought it would be adopted by the Emperor, and the more so, as it had been concurred in by the Governor of Canton, to whom, as well as the other governors, the memorial of Heu Naitsi had been referred for their consideration. In expectation of the trade being legalized, measures were taken by foreigners to secure an increased production of the deleterious drug. The ruinous nature of this line of policy was, however, ably exposed by three very remarkable state documents, drawn up by a Cabinet Minister, Choo Tsun; another by Hwang Tseotsze, President of the Sacrificial Court; and a third by a sub-censor named Heu Kiu. The question of the legalization of the traffic in opium, with these memorials against it, was again submitted to all the high officers of the empire for their consideration and advice. After full and mature deliberation, ex-

tending over a period of more than a year's duration, the nearly unanimous decision of the advisers of the Emperor was, that, on account of the injuries it inflicted on the people, the nefarious traffic *should not be legalised.* At the same time it was resolved to have recourse to yet more stringent measures to suppress the seductive, but ruinous vice, and to put a stop to the smuggling of the poison. Heu Naitsi, who had recommended the legalisation of the traffic in opium was disgraced, and the severity of the punishments for smuggling by Chinese, and smoking it, was increased. The names and residences of the foreign merchants in Canton, who were concerned in the traffic, having been reported to the Emperor, an edict was issued, commanding their immediate departure from China. To still further excite the attention of foreigners to the stringency of the measures now taken by Government to put down the traffic in opium and suppress its consumption, early in 1838, a Chinese, who had been engaged in smuggling, was executed at Macao in presence of many foreign and Chinese witnesses; later in the same year, another of the transgressors of the laws against opium was executed near the foreign residences in Canton; and again, early in 1839, a third Chinese was executed in the same vicinity, and it was reported that the upper lips of smokers in Hupeh province were cut off to incapacitate them from inhaling the fascinating poison. These measures checked the consumption to a degree that surprised many foreign residents, who had witnessed the in-

effectual manner in which previous edicts had been carried into effect. But it having been reported to the Emperor that the foreign merchants still continued to carry on the obnoxious traffic, and that the store-ships still lay quietly at anchor at Lin Tin, the Emperor's patience was at length exhausted by this contumacious disregard of his edicts and continued trampling on his laws; and in the latter part of 1838 he resolved to proceed to extremities. To this end he clothed a trusted and valued public officer with extraordinary powers, such as had only been thrice delegated by the Emperors of this dynasty, and sent him to Canton to put a stop to the traffic. It is said that the Emperor gave his distinguished servant, Lin, his instructions in person; and as he spoke to him of the evils that had been inflicted upon his people for these tens of years by this overflowing poison, his emotions checked his utterance. He paused and wept; then turning to the Commissioner he said,—"How, alas! can I die and go to the shades of my imperial father and ancestors until these direful evils are removed?"

Commissioner Lin arrived at Canton, March 10, 1839. He immediately made known the purpose of the Emperor to put a complete stop to the opium trade; he addressed the most earnest remonstrances to the foreigners to abandon this illegal traffic, that the legitimate trade might continue uninterrupted; and he demanded that this smuggled poison should be quietly and immediately surrendered to him for destruction. This proper and reasonable demand,

and which would have been enforced in every other country, was refused. The Chinese Commissioner then had recourse to more stringent measures, by preventing the departure of all foreigners from Canton till the opium was delivered to him by those who owned it. The noble lord, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, Lord Palmerston, had signified to the British merchants, that their country's protection would not be afforded to enable them to violate the laws of the empire to which they traded. His language is as explicit as the sentiment is just. "*No protection can be afforded to enable British subjects to violate the laws of the country to which they trade. Any loss, therefore, which such persons may suffer in consequence of the more effectual execution of the Chinese laws on this subject must be borne by the parties who have brought the loss on themselves by their own acts.*"

When the Chinese Commissioners had recourse to more stringent measures for obtaining possession of this forfeited property which was stored in the vessels at Lin Tin, her Britannic Majesty's Superintendent of Trade, Captain Elliot, stepped in to protect British subjects from the threatened losses, which their own conduct had justly brought upon them in direct contravention of the sentiments of the noble lord the Secretary for Foreign Affairs. Captain Elliot called upon British subjects to deliver up the smuggled opium to him for the use of the British Government, and pledged the faith of that Government to remunerate them. In answer to his call, the

enormous amount of 20,283 chests were delivered from the accumulated quantity on hand; accumulated, because owing to the stringent measures which were in operation to suppress its consumption, the amount of sales had been greatly lessened. This quantity was delivered over to the Chinese Commissioner by her Majesty's Superintendent under protest; and, on this authorised act of the Superintendent, was based the claim afterwards made upon the Chinese Government for the value of the opium, which, at the then depreciated prices, was estimated at about £1,800,000. At the same time, the Chinese Commissioner required a bond of all foreign merchants, that they would not hereafter engage in this traffic. That pledge was given in the following language:—"They beg to represent, that now being made fully aware of the Imperial commands for the entire abolition of the traffic in opium, the undersigned foreign merchants hereby pledge themselves not to deal in opium, nor to attempt to introduce it into the Chinese Empire."

Lin having reported to the Emperor, that 20,283 chests had been delivered up, the Emperor sent down his mandate that the whole should be destroyed. This was most effectually done, in the presence of foreign witnesses, by mixing it with lime and salt in large trenches; after which process, the whole was let out into the sea. The work occupied a period of twenty days. Such was the Emperor's proceedings, to show his regard for the lives and happiness of his people, and to celebrate, as he supposed, the complete success of his efforts to put a stop to this

desolating curse. The Superintendent of British trade also announced to her Majesty's Government, "that as all the opium on hand had been destroyed, and all the foreign merchants had given bonds not to deal in opium, nor to attempt to introduce it into the Chinese empire, the traffic in opium was entirely abolished!"

The consequence of seizing and confiscating this smuggled opium, and of other measures growing out of it, was the war declared by England. When the Emperor and his high officers became fully sensible, by dear-bought experience, of their inability to resist the prowess of the British arms, he concluded a treaty, one article of which stipulated that the Emperor of China should pay £1,200,000 as indemnity for the contraband opium which he had, in accordance with the usage of all nations, confiscated, and £3,000,000 sterling for the expenses of the war; but in this treaty there was not any provision or stipulation made against the traffic, on account of which the two countries had been involved in a destructive but unequal contest. After the high Chinese Commissioners had signified their acceptance of the terms, which were dictated to them by the British envoy, "they eagerly requested to know why we (the British) would not act fairly towards them (the Chinese), by prohibiting the cultivation of the poppy in our dominions." The British Envoy, Sir Henry Pottinger, replied,—"Your people must become more virtuous, your officers incorruptible, and then you can stop the opium coming into your borders. Other people will bring it to you, if we should stop

the cultivation of the poppy;" and in conclusion, the Envoy added, "You cannot do better than legalise it!" In order, however, to avert public indignation in this country, and present some palliative to the outraged principles of the opponents of opium smuggling, there was inserted in a supplementary treaty a proviso that, "If any merchant vessels shall, in contravention of this agreement, and of a proclamation to be issued by the British plenipotentiary, repair to any other port or places (than the five ports), the Chinese Government shall be at liberty to confiscate both vessels and cargoes." But the Chinese Government, having had to pay so dearly for confiscating the cargoes of smuggling vessels in 1839, has never dared to interfere with the traffic in opium since, so that the practical result of the opium war has been to secure perfect impunity to the contraband trade.

The matter is now very seldom referred to in the Pekin Gazette. It was proposed to the young Emperor, Hienfung, in 1853, when he was involved in great financial embarrassment, that he should assist his revenue by legalising the trade in opium; it being represented to him that the revenue therefrom would be about £1,200,000 sterling. But after several months' deliberation, the Emperor announced his intention to continue the policy of his revered ancestors; thus have three Emperors in succession persevered in views of moral rectitude, amid so many difficulties, and so many allurements to induce the adoption of an opposite policy.

I have the honour to be, &c.

R. ALEXANDER.

LETTER III.

EFFECTS OF THE OPIUM MONOPOLY AND SMUGGLING UPON THE COMMERCE OF GREAT BRITAIN.

My Lord,

It would be but an irrelevant digression to enter upon the bloodshed and devastating circumstances of the opium war. If you will imagine the military and naval organisation of Great Britain to have been retrograded to what it was about the reign of Richard II., and this country subjected to blockade and invasion by the line-of-battle ships and army of France in their present perfection, you will be able to form a fair idea of the comparative means and resources of two such unequally matched belligerents. When our troops came in collision with the Tartars, they encountered an enemy whose half-disciplined energy and desperate courage called forth those high military qualifications of skill and valour on our part, which triumphed over every resistance that was offered; but, as regards the unwarlike Chinese, I remember the expression of an old Mahomedan native officer of the Madras artillery, who had served in the campaigns under the Duke of

Wellington, and through the hard struggles of the first Birmese war. "Then, Sahib, our hearts rose to contend with *men*, but as for firing upon these Cheen Logue,* it was like turning our guns upon flocks of sheep."

The result of the war was, that having forced the Chinese to pay for the contraband opium they had confiscated, and the expenses of our unjust invasion of their country, we entered into a treaty, by which we recognise their right to seize and confiscate the drug. The island of Hong Kong was ceded to us, and five Chinese ports were opened for legal trade, at which we were permitted to establish consuls, for whom we engaged that they were to co-operate with the Chinese authorities if any English vessels should arrive within the range of their consular jurisdiction with the contraband drug on board. How these engagements have been fulfilled will be seen as I proceed to show the effects of opium smuggling upon the commerce and interests of Great Britain, availing myself of some statements long since published, and still, I believe, neither refuted nor denied.

"The excess of exports from China to Great Britain over the imports from Great Britain to China, in 1837, according to the statements of the Canton Chamber of Commerce, was about £3,200,000 sterling, and the excess of exports to the United States over the imports from that country, for the same year, was about £860,000 sterling, both together making £4,060,000 sterling! This excess of exports to, over the exports from, these countries, has been about the same every

* Chinese people.

successive year till 1852. The immense balance of £4,060,000 sterling in favour of China every year, on the legalised commerce, ought to enable China to take an enormous quantity of Western manufactures, and £3,200,000 ought to go to the purchase of the manufactures of Great Britain. But what is the fact? The smuggled opium comes in and sweeps away all this immense balance, and brings the Chinese in debt to nearly an equal sum, nearly all of which (£7,000,000) is taken away in silver to fill the coffers of the East Indian Government, and of the opium merchant, to the prejudice of the upright and hard-working manufacturer. But this is by no means the extent of the injury done to the manufacturer. The Chinese have been so impoverished by this continued drain upon their country of £4,000,000 sterling every year for a long succession of years, that they cannot pay remunerating prices for the quantity of Western commodities that they now take. It has been estimated, that about £90,000,000 sterling have been taken away from China in silver during this century in payment for opium. The result is, that while the price of opium has been maintained or increased, the price of Western manufactures has gradually fallen from one-half to one-third of their former rates. In many cases, the prices are below the cost of manufacture, not including the cost of transportation. A 'Report on the China Trade,' published in 1851, mentions as evidence of the lowered prices of British manufactures, that 'long-cloths, valued, in 1836-7, at £1 sterling, are now (1851) quoted at from seven to eleven shillings a-piece; while opium, which has doubled in quantity, has generally maintained its price.' This diminution in price is much more on some other articles, especially on articles of luxury and ornament. It may then be asked if British manufactures are sold below remunerative prices, how are the merchants able to continue importing them? The plan of operations is this: the merchants engaged in the China trade can place their funds in China for the purchase of teas and silks by manufactured goods, even at these low prices, at a less discount than they can by importing silver, or purchasing exchanges; and one reason of this is, that they get manufactures on credit, and hope to get the return of Chinese productions in time to make payment for the manufactures, whereas the money would be at interest from the day they despatched it. The merchants must then make up this loss incurred in getting their funds to China, as well as their profits, by charging high prices for Chinese productions. Thus, in the long-run, the manufacturers and the consumers of tea and Chinese silks pay the revenue of £3,500,000, which the East India Company derive from opium, by the

loss sustained on manufactures sent to China, and by having to pay enhanced prices on those articles imported from China.

"That the opium trade is injurious to every other commercial interest with China, and prevents the Chinese from taking an increased quantity of Western manufactures, can be established by the testimony of the highest authorities, and of those best acquainted with the China trade. Mr. W. Norton gave the following testimony on this subject before the Select Committee of the House of Commons, 20th April, 1847:—'British general imports (British India included) [which was not included in the statement given above] into China are £2,321,692; the exports from China are £4,492,379, which would give a balance of trade in favour of China of £2,170,687; and if that existed in reality, I can easily conceive that the trade in British manufactures would increase to an enormous extent. But the purchase of opium to the amount of £5,400,000 (the cost in India, not reckoning the additional cost in China) leaves a balance against China eventually of £3,229,313. The Chinese, it is well known, are drained of their silver to an enormous extent. It is a grievance, pressing upon China to such an extent, that it may, in the end, oblige them to break off their intercourse, contrary even to their own will, in order to stop it, for it is reducing them comparatively to a powerless state as regards their circulation.'

"The 'Friend of China,' in its issue for July 28, 1849, has the following remarks:—'The opium trade has interfered with the legitimate trade to an unusual extent since the opening of the northern ports. Silk in particular has been taken in barter for opium to a very large extent. Before the treaty, the shipments of raw silk to Great Britain were from 3,000 to 5,000 bales annually. In the last commercial year, the export from Shanghae was upwards of 17,000 bales; the previous year it was 22,000 bales. This large increase in the silk trade would have operated favourably upon the import of manufactured goods; but, unfortunately, the opium dealers cut in upon it. The silk taken in barter for opium was shipped to England and sold at a profit; while Lancashire and Yorkshire goods—the legitimate articles of exchange—would have rotted in the stores at Shanghae, had the factors not pushed them off for what they would fetch. Thus the larger consumption of tea and silk in the British isles would be provided for by the returns for opium. There is no way of getting over this difficulty. The opium trade progresses steadily. The increased consumption of teas and silk in Great Britain would merely result in the increase of the opium trade; the case of the British manufacturer is hopeless.'

"Mr. Montgomery Martin says,—'I inquired of the Taoutai at Shanghae, what would be the best means of increasing our commerce with China;' and his first answer to me, in presence of Captain Balfour, Her Majesty's Consul, was, 'Cease to send us so much opium, and we will be able to take your manufactures.'

"The Canton Circular, in 1846, observed,—'Considering that the prime cost of opium in Bengal is about 250 rupees per chest, and that it is now sold by auction (in Calcutta) for 1,200 or 1,600 rupees a chest, we need not ask the question, who have been chiefly benefited by the war in China, justly termed the Opium War. With respect to the opium trade, as at present conducted, it is certainly a great evil, and indirectly injures the sale of other merchandise.'

"Mr. Montgomery Martin says, 'The true remedy of our deficient trade with China is not to be found in the reduction of £1,000,000 or £2,000,000 sterling of tea duties, but in a perfect freedom of intercourse with China; in facilities of access to the interior of that vast country; and in the abolition of the pernicious opium traffic, which absorbs the money, £4,000,000 sterling, that would otherwise be devoted to the purchase of British manufactures.'

"In an interesting article on 'Tea and the Tea Trade,' published in Hunt's 'Merchant's Magazine' for January, 1850, Mr. Gideon Nye, junior, a leading American merchant in China, says, 'Until the taste for this pernicious drug (opium) had spread insidiously over the empire, and the traffic in it had largely increased, China was the recipient of the precious metals from the western nations, in the adjustment of the balance of trade in her favour; but since the expiration of the East India Company's Charter (1834), the consumption of it has so largely augmented, that, although the exports of China produce have also greatly increased, yet the export of the precious metals in adjustment of the balance adverse to China, has reached the annual sum of about 10,000,000 dollars, thus inflicting upon China a twofold injury in the demoralization of her people, and the undermining of her pecuniary resources, whose effects are of the most grave moment, as threatening the very integrity of the empire.'

"As one of the impediments in the way of the prosperity of the tea trade, the consideration of the influence of this immense traffic is in nowise a digression; nor can we consistently content ourselves with merely an incidental allusion to it, although it is no part of our purpose to discuss the moral question, for we find it greatly prejudicial to the whole legal trade with China. It seriously disturbs the financial affairs

of the country, thus impairing confidence and directly depressing the prices of all other articles of importation, whilst, at the same time, raising those of export articles.'

"Mr. Nye quotes from a letter of August, 1849, from a mercantile house at Shanghae, as follows:—'The country cannot take both goods and drug, and thus the question is, so far as England is concerned,—which branch of industry should be encouraged? The East India Company will never give up the drug, and probably the Government would not, should the Company's charter not be renewed in 1854. It appears to us, the difficulty must increase with the increasing quantity of the luxury imported.'

"These authorities which might be definitely increased while they differ as to the amount, according to the year in which their calculations were made, and the principles of reckoning the commerce, all agree in these great and important facts, that the opium trade is 'intensely injurious' to the legitimate trade; that it causes the prices at which British manufactures can be sold to the Chinese to be depreciated, and, in many cases, to be below the price of production; that it causes the prices of Chinese products to be enhanced to the British purchasers, and that it deprives the British manufacturers of customers that properly belong to them, who are ready to purchase to the enormous extent of between three and four millions sterling.

"But, perhaps, some one may object and say, that the opium trade does good in thus coming in to pay off the balance of trade, in favour of China, in the legitimate commerce; for otherwise the merchants would have to import silver to pay it off, and it would be a heavy drain upon Britain to export between three and four millions sterling to China in payment for her products. If the opium trade was to stop suddenly, some treasure would of course have to be imported to pay the balance of trade; but the trade would soon arrange itself. And if the Chinese nation were prevented squandering the eight millions sterling annually for the pernicious drug, they would very soon not only take the whole of the present balance in manufactured goods, but they would take them at improved prices, and the exports and imports would gradually and greatly increase. For the limit is not near reached yet to which Great Britain can consume Chinese products; and so also of China, much less has she reached the limit to which she could consume British products, if she was not so impoverished by this immense squandering for opium. But even if it should be necessary to import treasure to pay the balance of trade, it

would be a great deal cheaper than to pay it with opium; for thereby you would enrich one of your best customers, and thus in the end enable them to take more goods and at better prices, and Chinese products could be purchased at lower prices.

"The class of persons who are especially interested in the abolition of opium smuggling, embraces the merchants in Great Britain, and of the United States, and China, who are engaged only in the legal China trade. The advantage which the opium dealer has over the honest merchant can be seen at a glance. While the honest merchant has to place his funds in China for the purpose of Chinese products, at a greater or less discount, the opium dealer gets his funds there by opium at, as it is said, a profit of 15 per cent. A still further advantage that the opium dealers possess is, that they receive nearly all the proceeds of the opium in money, amounting nearly to £7,000,000 sterling, which gives them a preponderating influence in the money market, and in regulating the rates of exchange between China and Great Britain, and China and India."

As, however, this important branch of my subject must come under the consideration of others far more competent to deal with it than I can pretend to be, I will conclude with a short summary of the effects of opium-smuggling on legal traffic. Your lordship will perceive that there is a difference between some of the figures taken from the table on the next page and the Parliamentary Blue Book of 1854, and those quoted from publications of earlier dates.

The trade with China has always been considered by the Chinese as a *barter* trade, and it has been so in Canton to a great extent.

China has no paper currency worthy of notice, and, therefore, she is dependent on a clumsy metallic currency, consisting of Spanish dollars and ingots of silver. There is also a copper coin used by the poorer classes.

TABLE

Drawn up from Official Returns, showing the value of Opium Smuggling in excess of the Legal Trade of India, and the drain of Specie from China to the detriment of the Commerce of Great Britain; the exchange calculated 10 rupees for £1 sterling.

	1849-50.	1850-51.	1851-52.	1852-53.	1853-54.
			BENGAL.		
Imports.					
Merchandise	187,099	153,445	223,797	224,176	246,403
Treasure	797,917	441,627	888,318	1,189,480	148,875
Total Imports ....£	985,016	595,072	1,112,115	1,413,656	395,278
Exports.					
Opium	3,171,761	2,777,518	2,713,469	3,482,948	3,069,895
Other Merchandise....	49,579	267,773	508,259	353,551	185,923
Treasure	60,356	20,000	None.	5,275	260,700
Total Exports ....£	3,281,696	3,064,291	3,221,728	3,841,774	3,516,518
			MADRAS.		
Imports.					
Merchandise	10,365	8,995	16,030	14,268	1,783
Treasure	2,856	..	..	..	..
Total Imports ....£	13,491	8,995	16,030	14,268	1,783
Exports.					
Merchandise	105,534	118,820	136,276	166,202	37,530
Treasure	55	..	..	..	20
Total Exports ....£	105,589	118,820	136,276	166,202	37,550
			BOMBAY.		
Imports.					
Merchandise	610,068	826,929	688,332	628,498	562,154
Treasure	1,576,144	1,403,655	1,413,474	1,241,327	502,890
Total Imports ....£	2,186,212	2,230,584	2,101,806	1,869,825	1,065,044
Exports.					
Merchandise	704,858	891,620	1,794,789	629,624	676,449
Opium	2,371,827	2,96,560	3,368,838	2,987,967	2,732,575
Treasure	250	1,000	3,575	26,251	459,322
Total Exports ....£	3,076,935	3,189,250	5,167,202	3,643,842	3,868,346

EXPORTS and IMPORTS between Great Britain and China; the former in the best year (1852), being at the rate of about $1\frac{1}{2}d.$ for each subject of the Chinese Empire.

	1849.	1850.	1851.	1852.	1853.
Exports to China (British produce.) £	885,140	965,954	1,528,869	1,918,244	1,373,689
Imports from China £	6,170,672	5,849,025	7,971,495	7,712,771	8,255,615

The opium trade, however, being contraband, the natives who engaged in it found it most convenient, for the purpose of secrecy and despatch, to pay silver, which thus became the regular mode of payment for opium.

The gradual extension of this trade from half a million sterling in 1816 to three millions sterling before the war, seriously embarrassed the internal commerce and revenues of the country by withdrawing annually so large a sum from the needed circulation. Since the war of 1841-2, the importations of opium have continued to increase, till it now costs between six and seven millions sterling. Latterly, so great has been the difficulty of getting silver, that part of the China produce has been paid for the opium, and dollars have been imported to relieve the currency at the chief ports.

This will appear more clearly by looking at the following figures :—

	£
Export of produce, China to Great Britain	8,255,615
Legal imports in part payment.....	1,373,689
Leaving to be paid by us	£6,881,926

Were there no opium trade, this balance would be reduced :—

First,—By a better price being given for the same quantity of our manufactures; and, secondly, by an increased demand for them.

But the opium trade entirely changes the face of affairs, and we have the following as the state of the whole China Trade .—

	£	£
Legal imports, British and Indian ...	2,273,591	
,, American	900,000	
,, Others	600,000	
	3,773,591	
Contraband opium, at its value in India, say	5,802,470	
		9,576,061
Export of produce:		
British and Indian	9,065,955	
American	2,000,000	
Others	500,000	
		11,565,955

The opium and legal trade are mixed up to a great extent, but the following is a rough analysis:—

British Legal Trade:

	£
We receive from China produce, value, say	9,065,955
For this we pay in legal merchandise, say...........	2,273,591
*And there remains to be paid for in opium, or in silver, the proceeds of opium, about	£6,792,364

American Legal Trade:

	£
They receive from China produce, value, say.........	2,000,000
For this they pay in legal merchandise, say	900,000
And there remains to be paid for in opium, or silver, the proceeds of opium, about	£1,100,000

Opium Trade:

	£
We now, in 1856, sell to the Chinese not less than 75,000 chests, value above....................	6,000,000

The question now is, how does this annual *importation* of more than six millions sterling of *opium*, and the annual large *export* of *silver*, affect China and the legal trade?

In three ways, 1st, in the destructive effect of

* A part of this bullion settlement is made in London, and the amount is adjusted between India and China, by bills on England.

opium-smoking on the Chinese; 2d, in the derangement of the circulation of the country; and, 3d, in an injurious influence on the legal foreign trade.

1st. The consumption of this destructive drug is just so much capital destroyed, besides involving thousands of Chinese families annually in ruin, causing the death of many more, and spreading poverty and crime over the land.

2d. The evils resulting from the derangement and restriction of the circulation can scarcely be exaggerated. Suppose a country like our own suddenly reduced to a state of barter, and this to continue for a series of years by the withdrawal of paper credit, while a very scanty quantity of metallic money remained. All the evils that would thus accrue are those which have fallen upon China. The whole machinery of commerce is impeded and contracted within the narrowest dimensions, poverty becomes general, and, in the absence of efficient laws, crime becomes rampant. Like the deteriorating of the blood in the human system, the whole frame decays. The current money annually removed from the circulation of the country, through the consumption of a destructive drug, the use of which is on the increase, must inevitably lead the nation to ruin, which can be but slightly, if at all, retarded, by the inadequate supply of silver obtained from the mines in China.

3d. The injurious influence on the legal foreign trade is plain. Our own prosperity as a commercial nation is wrapt up with the prosperity of the nations with which we deal. As China becomes less and less

able to bear the drain of silver, she is gradually paying for the opium with her produce, the drug thus supplanting the foreign legal merchandise. Did she retain the silver to keep up a healthy circulation at home, there cannot be a doubt she could consume much more largely of our manufactures, besides giving a better price for them.

A merchant resolved to keep himself clear of the opium trade can scarcely maintain a position in China. He cannot sell his manufactures for cash, unless at a loosing price; and he is constantly at a disadvantage, in the difficulty of obtaining cash for a favourable investment in China produce.

It has been argued that the trade is necessary to keep up the commerce of the country from the readiness with which it commands silver; but this is a fallacy, as has been already shown. The exchanges of the East are no doubt facilitated by this trade, as the larger the commerce in any part of the world, the greater the facilities for exchange. Capitalists in England send large sums of money out to India to go to China, either in opium, or in bills on opium, and to be returned home from China in bills or produce, and thus the question of exchange has become intricated with that of opium smuggling, and affects now the general Eastern commerce of Great Britain and America. It might be deemed presumptuous in me strongly to maintain before a community like that of the British public a direct affirmative of the cause and evil consequences of the present drain of bullion, and its effects upon the monetary system of Europe. Standing, however,

upon what I consider the safe ground of facts and authority, I avail myself of an extract from the *Times** newspaper of 23rd October, 1856.

The Board of Trade have lately published some particulars furnished by Mr. Consul Robertson, on the commerce of Shanghai, during the past year, together with a statement of the peculiar condition of that port as regards its silver currency and the premium on the Carolus dollar. It appears that the imports in 1855, exclusive of specie and opium, amounted to £1,602,849, of which England supplied £1,122,241; America, £272,708; and other countries £207,900; while the exports reached the extraordinary total of £12,603,540, of which £6,405,040 were to England, £5,396,416 to America, and £102,084 to other countries. The balance to be met was therefore £11,000,691. Towards this the treasure imported was £2,335,017, and the opium from India £3,174,949. As the two latter items however amount only to £5,509,966, there is, according to these figures, an additional sum of £5,490,725, which must have been liquidated by some unexplained means. Discrepancies in the official valuations would perhaps partly account for it, but it may be presumed that at the end of the year a considerable sum remained to be discharged by opium and silver which had yet to arrive. With regard to the trade between China and the United States, the fact that while the imports of American goods were only £272,708, the exports of teas, silks, &c., to that country were £5,396,416, illustrates the extent to which England acts as the banking agent between them, a large proportion of the remittances brought by each New York packet being to meet the draughts from China on American account made payable in London. During the year the general trade of Shanghai gave employment to 871 vessels, representing 311,139 tons, while the revenue derived from it by the Imperial Government in the shape of Customs' duties was £845,146. It is to be regretted that no opportunity exists of making a comparative statement with previous years, accurate returns not having been before obtainable. The belief is, that notwithstanding the disorganized state of the empire, the import business reached a fair average of satisfactory prices, and it appears that the stocks held at the close of the year were not so heavy as had been anticipated. The opium trade has lately been characterized by freedom

* *Vide* Abstract of Reports on the trade of various counties and places for the year 1855, presented to both Houses of Parliament by command of Her Majesty, 1856. Pp. 29 to 36.

from the speculative fluctuations which were common when steam communication with India was less regular, and the quotations during the past year have been steady; but, owing to the disorganized state of the interior, the Chinese dealers have restricted their investments as much as possible. The tea produce of the season was very late, but ultimately large supplies came down, and an extensive business took place at full rates, although some of the medium classes were diverted to the rising port of Foochow.

Three incidents are noticeable in this extract, viz.:—the large amount of opium over British manufactures; the precarious state of the inland opium traffic; and the vigour with which legal trade in tea and other articles is carried on, and might be extended.

The antagonism of legal and contraband trade being thus brought out, let me remind your Lordship, that Lord Dalhousie in his published minute on his administration of the Government of India, estimates that the opium monopoly will this year raise the revenue to £5,000,000 sterling, dependent of course upon increased smuggling into China.

The city article of the *Times* of the 18th September 1856, which discusses the question of exchange that I purposely avoid entering into, states that the exportation of English goods to China during the last three years, has averaged only about £1,300,000; with this I contrast the following statement of the exportation of bullion, and adverting to the present political and commercial state of China leave others to decide whether opium smuggling is or is not injurious to our manufactures, and whether the income which the East India Company obtains from the monopoly of the drug, is not drawn from a source that ought to aliment our national prosperity

by the production of cotton, &c. for home manufactures, and promotion of a larger demand for those manufactures abroad.

REPORT OF GOLD BULLION TO THE EAST.

FROM LONDON TO—	YEARS ENDING 7TH JANUARY.				From 7th Jan. to 7th Sept.
	1852-1853.	1854.	1855.	1856.	1856.
Calcutta .... £	..	..	..	350	769
Madras	300	24,207	120	17,889	8,327
Bombay	..	2,400	..	1,232	1,500
Singapore, Penang, & China	20,950	133,310	310,629	276,912	136,517
Total .... £	21,250	159,917	310,749	296,383	147,113

EXPORT OF SILVER BULLION TO THE EAST.

FROM LONDON TO—	YEARS ENDING 7TH JANUARY.				From 7th Jan. to 7th Sept.
	1852-1853.	1854.	1855.	1856.	1856.
Calcutta .... £	1,266,098	985,516	125,758	2,372,145	2,525,114
Madras	106,979	228,882	26,392	177,640	191,833
Bombay	948,206	1,667,976	108,755	2,369,315	2,955,430
Singapore, Penang, & China	117,397	2,084,445	2,943,411	1,419,913	2,652,268
Total .... £	2,438,680	4,966,819	3,204,336	6,339,013	8,324,645

EXPORT OF SILVER BULLION.

From MEDITERRANEAN PORTS TO—	YEARS.			From January to 4th June.	From January to 4th June.
	1853.	1854.	1855.	1856.	1856.
				Gold.	Silver.
Calcutta ....£	88,517	No return	603,141	,,	88,099
Madras	175,561	do	289,014	10,000	101,663
Bombay	5,785	do	51,344	,,	31,885
Singapore, Penang, & China	643,612	do	571,813	50,000	348,797
Total......£	913,475	do	1,515,312	60,000	570,444

A Committee of the House of Commons deputed in 1847, to take into consideration the state of our commercial relations with China, reported thus, "We regret that the trade with that country has been for some time in a very unsatisfactory condition, and that the result of our extended intercourse has by no means realised the just expectations which had naturally been founded on a free access to so magnificent a market." From the same report may be taken *passim* the following extracts; "We find that the difficulties of the trade do not arise from any want of demand in China for articles of British manufacture, or from the increasing competition of other nations; the payment for opium from the inordinate desire for it which prevails, and from the unrecognised nature of the transaction, which requires a prompt settlement of accounts, absorbs the silver to the great inconvenience of the general traffic of the Chinese, and tea and silk must in fact pay the rest."

Another circumstance must be taken into consideration, which is the probability that in the present distracted state of China, bullion is withdrawn from commerce and secreted by the people as a measure of security against future vicissitudes.

I have the honour to be, &c.

R. ALEXANDER.

LETTER IV.

TESTIMONIES AGAINST THE CONTRABAND TRADE IN OPIUM.

My Lord,

I have felt the difficulty of condensing the almost incredible operations of more than a half-century's traffic, and their effects upon a people who cling with unenlightened pertinacity to customs which they trace back, with national pride, through long ages of ancestral history and tradition; these customs still remain, and, however barbarous we may deem them, they witness against the boasted enlightenment and Christianity of Great Britain, who, by her intercourse with China, leaves their permanency unaltered, and has, as yet, introduced to millions of heathen men, women, and children, but little beyond the lawless enterprise of contrabandism, and the unmitigated misery inseparable from its success.

I here adduce some very competent *native* authorities on the subject, beginning with the statement of Kinshan, one of the literati of Nankin, in 1836:—

"Opium is a poisonous drug, brought from foreign countries. At first the smokers of it merely strive to follow the fashion of the day, but in the sequel the poison takes effect, and the habit becomes fixed. The sleeping smokers are like corpses,—lean and haggard as demons; such are the injuries it does to life; it throws whole families into ruin, dissipates every kind of property, and destroys man himself. There cannot be a greater evil than this. In comparison with arsenic, I pronounce it to be tenfold the greater poison, for those who smoke the drug are injured in many ways. 1st. It exhausts the animal spirits. Hence the youth who smoke will shorten their days, and those in middle age who smoke, will hasten the termination of their years. 2nd. It impedes the regular performance of business. 3rd. It wastes the flesh and blood. Flesh is gradually worn away and consumed from the robust who smoke, and their skin hangs down like bags,—the faces of the weak who smoke, are black and cadaverous, and their bones are naked as billets of wood. 4th. It dissipates every kind of property. 5th. It renders the person ill-favoured—mucus flows from their nostrils, and tears from their eyes, —their very bodies are putrid and rotten. 6th. It promotes obscenity. 7th. It discovers secrets. 8th. It violates laws. 9th. It attacks the vitals. 10th. It destroys life. When he has pawned everything in his possession, he will pawn his wife, and sell his daughters. Such are the inevitable consequences."

Choo Tsun, in an able memorial, in which he deprecates the legalizing of the opium trade, says:—

"To sum up the matter, the wide-spreading and baneful influence of opium, when regarded simply as injurious to property, is of inferior importance,—but when regarded as hurtful to the people, it demands most anxious consideration; for on the people lies the very foundation of the empire."

Heu Naitsi, in a memorial to the Emperor, recommending the legalizing of the traffic in opium, says:—

"The population of this vast empire has increased from year to year, but now the evil practice is spreading widely, and checking this increase. All men smoke, the high and the low, the old and the young, and life is degraded and shortened; the subsistence of families is wasted, and the wealth of the land is passing away."

The following is a translation of a paper, written to dissuade men from opium-smoking, which was placarded in the streets of Canton;

"Of all the evils which afflict mankind, the greatest are those which he perversely brings upon himself. In this life, he not only follows up a line of conduct that leads him to a miserable death, but he contentedly sinks down to the lowest of his species, and becomes an object of hatred and scorn to his fellow-men. When people begin to smoke, they at first observe no evil effects produced by it; but having smoked it still longer, the constitution gives way, the interior gradually decays, thousands of worms and maggots gnaw the intestines, their faces become discoloured, their teeth black, their appearance like charcoal, their necks shrink in, and their whole frame is hateful as that of a ghost or devil (which is the reason they are called opium-smoking devils), and, in fine, they insensibly hug their bane, till death overtakes them in the very act. At first it was merely used by the people of Canton and Tuhkien provinces, and those parts which border on the sea; now, however, it has gone East and West, it has crossed the frontiers into Tartary; nor is there a province in the empire where it has not found its way. At first none but a few depraved wretches of the male sex used it; and now we find that even Buddhist and Taonist priests, married women and young girls, are addicted to the life-destroying drug. In every item, in every respect, the evil is becoming more grave daily, more deeply-rooted than before; so much so, that its baneful influence seems to threaten, little by little, to degrade the whole of the population of the Celestial Empire to a level with reptiles, wild beasts, dogs and swine. Those foreigners, by means of their poison, dupe and befool the natives of China. It is not only that year by year they abstract thereby many millions of our money, but the direful appearances seem to indicate a wish on their part utterly to root out and extirpate us as a people. I repeat, that from the time of our becoming a nation, until now, never did any evil, at first so bland, so enticing, blaze so fearfully as does this dreadful poison."

That distinguished Chinese statesman, the late Commissioner Lin, in the extraordinary letter which he addressed to the Queen of England, expresses the following sentiments:—

"That in the ways of heaven no partiality exists, and no sanction is allowed to the injuring of others, for the advantage of one's self; that in man's natural desires, there is not any great diversity (for where is he who does not abhor death and seek life?), these are universally acknowledged principles. Though not making use of opium one's self, to venture, nevertheless, on the manufacture and sale of it, and with it to seduce the simple folk of this land, is to seek one's own livelihood by the exposure of others to death—to seek one's own advantage by other men's injury; and such acts are bitterly abhorrent to the nature of man, are utterly opposed to the ways of Heaven."

The same Commissioner in his address to foreigners, on the wickedness of smuggling opium, indignantly asks:—

"Why do you bring to our land the opium which in your own lands is not made use of? by it defrauding men of their property, and causing injury to their lives? I find that by this thing you have seduced and deluded the people of China these tens of years past; and countless are the unjust hoards that you have thus acquired. Such conduct rouses indignation in every human breast; and it is utterly inexcusable in the eye of Celestial reason. It is then a traffic on which Heaven looks with disgust; and who is he that may oppose its will? If, then, your laws forbid it to be consumed by yourselves, and yet permit it to be sold that it may be consumed by others, this is not in conformity with the principle of doing unto others what you would they should do unto you."

Such remonstrances and statements of the evils resulting to China from this traffic, might be largely multiplied. But I will conclude them by repeating the noble declaration of the late Emperor, made in 1844, when urged to legalize the trade—a declaration which is worthy of being inscribed on the archives of other empires and kingdoms than that of China:—"It is true, I cannot prevent the introduction of the flowing poison; gain-seeking and corrupt men will, for profit and sensuality, defeat my

wishes; but nothing will induce me to derive a revenue from the vice and misery of my people."

I now turn to the statements of Europeans, who have witnessed these frightful and appalling evils. The distinguished Missionary, the Rev. W. H. Medhurst, D.D., now of Shanghai, stated, at different times, that—

"Those who have not seen the effects of opium-smoking in the Eastern World, can hardly form any conception of its injurious results on the health, energies, and lives of those who indulge in it. The debilitating of the constitution, and the shortening of life, are sure to follow in a few years after the practice has been commenced. The dealers in opium are little aware how much harm they are the instruments of doing, by carrying on this demoralising and destructive traffic, but the differences between the increase of the Chinese people before and after the introduction of opium ought to open their eyes, and lead them to ask themselves whether they are not accountable for all the diseases and deaths of all those who have suffered by its introduction. And, if it be true that the Chinese increased at the rate of three per cent. per annum before the commencement of the traffic, and at the rate of one per cent. per annum since, it would be well for them to consider, whether the deficiency is not to be attributed, in some degree, to opium, and the guilt to be laid at the door of those who are instrumental in introducing it. In putting down the slave-trade, it was not considered too much to maintain a naval force on the coast of Africa; and to abolish slavery in the British dominions, the sum of £20,000,000 sterling was willingly sacrificed; yet slavery was not productive of more misery and death than the opium traffic, nor were Britons more implicated in the former than the latter. In the case before us, however, no compensation-money could be demanded, and only a few light-armed vessels would be required. The lands now employed in the cultivation of the poppy, being necessarily rich and fertile, would, if laid out in the raising of other productions, be equally valuable to the possessors; and, while the revenue was not diminished, the happiness, health, and industry of the people, would be increased; in addition to which, the Divine blessing would, doubtless, be doubly bestowed on those who renounced an apparent benefit to themselves in order to extend a real good to others."

Mr. Majoribanks, President of the Select Committee at Canton, observed in reference to the use of opium by the Chinese,—

"Opium can only be regarded, except when used as a medicine, as a pernicious poison. To any friend of humanity it is a painful subject of contemplation that we should continue to pour this black and envenomed poison into the sources of human happiness. The misery and demoralization occasioned by it are almost beyond belief. Any man who has witnessed its frightful ravages and demoralizing effects in China must feel deeply on this subject."

A British merchant, in an Essay on the Opium Trade, writes;—

"There is but one point of difference between the intoxication of ardent spirits and that of opium deserving of particular attention here, and that is the tenfold force with which every argument against the former applies to the latter. There is no slavery on earth to compare with the bondage into which opium casts its victims."

Mr. Montgomery Martin exclaims—

"Why, the slave-trade was merciful compared with the opium-trade! We did not destroy the bodies of the Africans, for it was our immediate interest to keep them alive; we did not debase their natures, corrupt their minds, nor destroy their souls. But the opium-seller slays the body, after he has corrupted, degraded, and annihilated the moral being of unhappy sinners; while every hour is bringing new victims to a Moloch which knows no satiety, and where the English murderer and Chinese suicide vie with each other in offerings at his shrine."

Captain John Shepperd, recently Chairman of the East India Company, who has often been in China, gave in evidence that—

"The smoking of opium has the most demoralizing effects. To a certain extent it destroys men's reason and faculties, and shortens life."

Sir R. Inglis, in the debate on opium in the House of Parliament, April 4, 1843, stated that—

"He held in his hand a statement which had appeared in the 'Batavian Gazette,' being an account by an individual who had visited one of the houses where opium was consumed. This individual said, 'I visited one of the opium-houses, and shall I tell you what I saw in this ante-chamber of hell? I thought it impossible to find anything worse than the results of drinking ardent spirits, but I have succeeded in finding something far worse.' He says he saw Malays, Chinese, men and women, old and young, in one mass, in one common herd, wallowing in their filth; beastly, sensual, devilish, and this under the eye of a Christian Government."

Captain Elliot, Her Majesty's Superintendent of Trade at Canton, pointed out the necessity for the occasional visits of vessels of war, to protect the legal trade, on account of the embarrassments and dangers arising from this illicit commerce. He wrote to Lord Palmerston, Feb. 21, 1837:—

"The fact, that such an article should have grown to be by far the most important part of our import trade, is of itself a source of painful reflection. And the *wide-spreading mischief which the manner of its pursuit has necessarily entailed*, so ably and faithfully represented in some of the papers I have the honour to transmit to your Lordship, aggravates the discomfort of the whole subject.

"And, perhaps, your Lordship may be led to think that a *gradual check to* OUR OWN GROWTH AND IMPORTS *would be of salutary effect.*

"It cannot be good that the conduct of a great trade should be so dependent upon the steady continuance of a *vast prohibited traffic in an article of vicious luxury*, high in price, and liable to frequent and prodigious fluctuation. *In a mere commercial point of view, therefore, I believe it is susceptible of proof, that the gradual diversion of British capital into other channels of employment than this, would be attended with advantageous consequences.*"*

* *Vide* "Correspondence relating to China, laid before the Houses of Parliament in 1840."

And in another letter to Lord Palmerston he says:—

"No man entertains deeper detestation of the disgrace and sin of this forced traffic on the coast of China than the humble individual who signs this despatch. I see little to choose between it and piracy."

Lord Broughton, when President of the Board of Control, in the debate in Parliament on the opium question, spoke thus:—

"Far be it from me to wish to say anything less than was deserved of the unfortunate results of that traffic, or to palliate them. He could not but deprecate it as a vice, for a great vice it was."

The Rev. E. B. Squire, who resided several years in China, as an agent of the Church Missionary Society, says of the opium dens in Canton:—

"Never, perhaps, was there a nearer approach to hell upon earth, than within the precincts of these vile hovels, where likewise, gaming is carried on to a great extent."

He adds:—

"Truly it is an engine in Satan's hand, and a powerful one; but let it never be forgotten that a nation professing Christianity supplies the means, and that nation is England, through her possessions in Hindostan."

Again, the Rev. Howard Malcolm, of the United States, says:—

"The great blot upon foreigners at Canton, though not upon all, is the opium trade. We have little reason to wonder at the reluctance of China to extend her intercourse with foreigners, when such intercourse brings upon her pestilence, poverty, and crime, and disturbance. No person can describe the horrors of the opium trade. That the government of British India should be the prime abettors of this abominable traffic, is wrong, as we continue to introduce into China with one hand

our transcendantly pure Christian Gospel, but with the other the destructive and demoralizing opium drug! If ever the enterprising spirit of our merchants shall succeed in breaking through the barrier which ancient jealousies and habits still interpose to a free intercourse with the interior of this vast empire, it will be by making the Christian missionary his pioneer, and by availing himself of that powerful impulse which religious zeal in a righteous cause can alone confer and sustain. The examples of disinterestedness and universal good-will which our Christian missionaries and physicians have exhibited in union, in China, in the free hospitals already established at Canton and Hong Kong, are calculated to soften the obdurate hearts, and have not been altogether thrown away, even upon the lawless and hostile population of Southern China. It can hardly be necessary to add that whatever thus raises the moral, religious, and social character of foreigners in China, must tend, in an eminent degree, to a juster appreciation amongst the Chinese of the advantages generally of foreign intercourse."

From different parts of a narrative of an exploratory visit to each of the Consular cities of China, in the Years 1844, 1845, 1846, by the Rev. George Smith, now Bishop of Victoria. I extract the following passages:—

"Our own vessel, though not engaged in the opium trade, carried 750 chests, which were discharged on board one of the receiving ships stationed at Woo Sung. My Chinese boy more than once asked me whether I knew there was opium on board, and what I should say in reply to the Chinese, if, after hearing me speak about *Yay-soo-taou-le*, 'Jesus' doctrines,' they should ask why I had come in a ship that brought opium, of which so many of his countrymen ate and perished?"

Again, at page 499:—

"The Chinese as a Government have been, during the last half century, opposed to the introduction of opium into the country. Individual officers have, for the sake of peace or bribes, doubtless connived at the evil; but, as *a Government*, they have prohibited the introduction of opium by that inalienable, inviolable right, by which every Govern-

ment can exclude articles of contraband trade. Consistently with the prohibited importation of opium, its growth has been interdicted in China itself, in six provinces of which it has at various times been clandestinely raised. The Chinese Government have always had it in their power to exclude foreign opium, by the simple process of encouraging the growth on their own soil. They have, however, pursued the opposite course; no slight evidence that the moral evils greatly, if not principally, influenced the prohibition of opium by the Imperial Government."

Did space permit, I would gladly quote the whole of the 29th chapter of the Bishop's work. He thus describes the opium smokers:—

"They formed a motley group of sallow, sunken cheeks, and glassy, watery eyes, as, with idiotic look and vacant laugh, they volunteered items of information, and described the process of their own degradation. There was to be seen the youth who, just emerging from boyhood, had only commenced the practice and was now hastening to premature old age; there was the man of middle age, who, for half his life a victim of this indulgence, was bearing to an early grave the wreck of his worn-out constitution; there was the elderly man, whose iron strength of frame could better ward off the slow but certain advances of decrepitude, but whose bloated cheek and vacant stare told of the struggle that was raging within; there was, again, the early spectacle of old age; and the man of sixty lived to tell of forty years consumed in the seductions of this vice. They all assented to the evils of their course, and professed a desire to be freed from its power. They all complained of loss of appetite—of the agonizing craving of the early morning—of prostration of strength,—and of increasing feebleness; but said they could not gain resolution to overcome the habit. They all stated its intoxicating effects to be worse than those of drunkenness, and described the extreme dizziness and vomiting which ensued, so as to incapacitate them for exertion. The oldest man, with strange inconsistency and candour expatiated on the misery of his course. For three years he had abandoned the indulgence, at the period of Commissioner Lin's edicts and compulsory prohibition of opium. At the conclusion of the British war, the foreign opium ships came unmolested to Amoy; he opened an opium shop for gain, and soon fell a victim to the drug. Some of the

Chinese asked us to give them medicine to cure them of the habit. On hearing that I was an *English missionary*, they exposed the inconsistency of my rebuking them for smoking opium, while my countrymen brought them the means of indulging it.

"The opium drain is severely felt in China, the more patriotic of their scholars speak of the rapid decay of their cities from their ancient wealth and splendour as the consequence of the system. This subject is the great difficulty that will, sooner or later, embarrass the two Governments. Let then the Christian legislators of Great Britain look to this evil, and boldly confront the danger. Let Indian revenues be collected from other sources than from a nation whose Government we have humbled to the dust, and incapacitated for the vigorous enforcement of her laws. Britain has displayed her power, the giant's attribute. Let her also exhibit the noble spectacle of a Christian Government, superior to the arts of oppression, and actuated by a regard for the best interests of mankind."

Sir George Staunton, than whom there is no higher authority in questions pertaining to China, thus expresses his view of the subject:—

"Every friend of humanity must surely desire that the revenues raised from the vast and fertile fields of India should be derived from a produce beneficial to man, rather than from one which, however ingeniously defended, or at least palliated, unquestionably leads him morally, as well as physically, to his destruction. It is mere trifling to defend the cultivation of opium on the score of its utility in medicine. The drug used in medicine, and that prepared for the purpose of a vicious luxury, are well known to be totally and essentially different. The same may be said of the attempt to place the abuse of opium upon the same level with the abuse of spirituous liquors. It is the main purpose in the former case; but in the latter it is only the exception. Nor can the opium farms be fairly justified on the ground of their supposed analogy to our gin-shops. It is true that our government tolerates gin-shops, but at least it does not build and maintain them. I cannot, therefore, but think that if Mr. Ball shall have decided the Government of India to persevere in their encouragement of the cultivation of the grateful, and at least innoxious, tea-shrubs, in place of the seducing, but poisonous poppy, he will be entitled to the cordial thanks of every genuine philanthropist."

But what will our countrymen think of an extract from Mons. Huc's "Chinese Empire," published at Paris in 1855:—

"When we set off again, we remarked that our escort was much more numerous than usual. Our palanquins proceeded between a double line of lancers on horseback, whom it appeared the Governor of Tchioung-tcheou had given us to protect us from robbers. These robbers were the smugglers of opium, and we were informed that for several years past they had come in great numbers to the province of Yun-nan, and even as far as Birmah, to fetch the opium sent to them from India. They came back with their contraband goods quite openly, but armed to the teeth, in order to be able to defy the mandarins who might oppose their passage. Instances were mentioned to us, of murderous conflicts in which both sides had fought desperately, the one to keep, the other to get, the smuggled goods; for Chinese soldiers are only valiant against robbers and smugglers when they hope to get possession of the booty themselves. When these armed bands of opium traders meet any rich travellers on the road, they seldom fail to do a little more business by attacking and plundering them.

"Everybody is aware of the unfortunate passion of the Chinese for opium, and of the war this fatal drug occasioned in 1840, between China and England. Its importance in the Celestial Empire is of rather recent date, but there is no trade in the world the progress of which has been so rapid. Two agents of the East India Company were the first who, in the beginning of the eighteenth century, conceived the deplorable thought of sending to China the opium of Bengal. Colonel Watson and Vice-President Wheeler are the persons to whom the Chinese are indebted for this new system of poisoning. History has preserved the name of Parmentier; why should it not also those of these two men? Whoever has done either great good or great harm to mankind ought to be remembered, to excite either gratitude or indignation.

"At present China purchases annually of the English opium to the amount of seven millions sterling; the traffic is contraband, but it is carried on along the whole coast of the empire, and especially in the neighbourhood of the five ports which have been opened to the Europeans. Large fine vessels, armed like ships of war, serve as depots to the English merchants, and the trade is protected, not only by the English Government, but also by the mandarins of the Celestial Empire. The

law which forbids the smoking of opium under pain of death, has indeed never been repealed; but every body smokes away quite at his ease notwithstanding. Pipes, lamps, and all the apparatus for smoking opium, are sold publicly in every town, and the mandarins themselves are the first to violate the law and give this bad example to the people, even in the courts of justice. During the whole of our long journey through China, we met with but one tribunal where opium was not smoked openly and with impunity.

"At Canton, at Macao, and at other ports open to European commerce, we have heard people attempt to justify the trade in opium, by the assertion that its effects were not so bad as was supposed; and that, as with fermented liquors and many other substances, the abuse only was injurious. A moderate use of opium, it was said, was rather beneficial to the feeble and lymphatic Chinese. Those who speak thus, however, are commonly dealers in opium, and it is easy to suppose that they seek by all possible arguments to quiet their consciences, which can hardly fail to tell them they are committing a bad action. But the spirit of trade and thirst of gold completely blind these men, who, with this exception, are generous in their conduct, keep their purses always open to the unfortunate, and are prompt in every good work. These rich speculators live habitually in the midst of gaiety and splendour, and think little of the frightful consequences of their detestable traffic. When from their superb palace-like mansions on the sea shore, they see their beautiful vessels returning from the Indies, gliding majestically over the waves, and entering with all their sails spread into the port, they do not reflect that the cargoes borne in these superb clippers are bringing ruin and desolation to numbers of families. With the exception of some rare smokers who, thanks to a quite exceptional organisation, are able to restrain themselves within the bounds of moderation, all others advance rapidly towards death, after having passed through the successive stages of idleness, debauchery, poverty, the ruin of their physical strength, and the complete prostration of their intellectual and moral faculties. Nothing can stop a smoker who has made much progress in this habit; incapable of attending to any kind of business, insensible to every event—the most hideous poverty, and the sight of a family plunged into despair and misery,—cannot rouse him to the smallest exertion, so complete is the disgusting apathy in which he is sunk.

"For several years past some of the southern provinces have been actively engaged in the cultivation of the poppy and the fabrication of

opium. The English merchants confess that the Chinese product is of excellent quality, though inferior to that of Bengal; but the English opium suffers so much adulteration before it reaches the pipe of the smoker, that it is not in reality as good as what the Chinese themselves prepare. The latter, however, though delivered perfectly pure, is sold at a low price, and only consumed by the smokers of the lowest class. That of the English, notwithstanding its adulteration, is very dear, and reserved to smokers of distinction; a caprice which can only be accounted for from the vanity of the rich Chinese, who would think it beneath them to smoke tobacco of native production, and not of a ruinous price; that which comes from a long way off must evidently be preferable.

"'Tutto il mondo è fatto come la nostra famiglia.'

"It may be easily foreseen, however, that this state of things cannot last; and it is probable that the Chinese will soon cultivate the poppy on a large scale, and make at home all the opium necessary for their consumption. The English cannot possibly offer an equally good article at the same price; and when the fashion, at present in their favour, shall have altered, they will no longer be able to sustain the competition. When that happens, British India will experience a terrible blow, that may possibly even be felt in the English metropolis, and then, who knows whether the passion of the Chinese for this fatal drug may not decline. It would be by no means surprising if, when they can procure opium easily, and at a low price, they should gradually abandon this degrading and murderous habit.

"It is said that the people of London, and many of the great manufacturing towns of England, have been for some time addicted to the use of opium, both in its liquid and solid form; but the circumstance has attracted little attention, though the progress of the habit is alarming. Curious and instructive would it be indeed, if we should one day see the English going to buy opium in the ports of China, and their ships bringing back from the Celestial Empire this deleterious stuff to poison England. Well might we exclaim in such a case, 'Leave judgment to God!'"

To add to such authorities—European, American, and Chinese—would be superfluous: I will therefore conclude my extracts with another of the

emphatic statements of Mr. Montgomery Martin, who, be it remembered, was Her Majesty's Treasurer in China, and returned to England to lay before Her Majesty's Government a Report on the state of our affairs in that country. In the Minutes of Evidence before the Select Committee of the House of Commons, on commercial relations with China (1847) are to be found the following question and answer :—

"3941. In what respect do you think the trade injurious to us in our relations with China?

"3942. Politically, with reference to our position with the Government of China. Had France, or America, or Russia, granted us an island on their coast, as a commercial station, and had they prohibited the use of opium, believing it to be injurious, we dare not in that case have made it a smoking-shop for the empire; and I would not act to the Chinese Government in a different manner than I would act to a government in Europe. Then, socially speaking, I believe it is the duty of this Government to uphold moral principles, and to disseminate religious truth, and she cannot do that with one hand, while on the other she is introducing into China an amount of opium which furnishes 17 grains a-day to each of three millions of people, and which, in the language of Mr. Lay, her Majesty's late Consul at Amoy, is 'hamstringing the nation:' that was the expression of Mr. Lay. I think it is desolating China, corrupting its government, and bringing the fabric of that extraordinary empire to a state of more rapid dissolution. Commercially speaking, it is injurious to us, because it prevents the extension of our manufactures in China. Four or five mercantile houses are engaged in that traffic, and derive a large amount of income from it, but the trade in England is materially cramped by the extension of opium consumption in China, to the extent of at least four millions sterling."

That the stigma of smuggling is peculiarly British I prove by the facts of the Spaniards prohibiting the export of opium from Manilla to China, and the Dutch from Batavia. The Americans having, like

ourselves, entered into a treaty by which smuggling the drug is prohibited, no vessel of the United States dare cover the contraband article with their star-spangled banner in the presence of their Consular authorities. The red-cross flag of England, my Lord, flies over the ships of other countries while engaged in their buccaneering traffic, and our national faith is not only habitually broken, but was especially dishonoured, when so late as September, 1855, the English opium smugglers, at anchor at Foo Choofoo, saluted with their cannon his Excellency Sir J. Bowring, Her Britannic Majesty's representative in China.

Nor let any one imagine that England is allowed to encourage crime with impunity. Retribution is overtaking us, and the plague is spreading, especially among our working classes, and with the votaries of fashionable life. Besides the use of opium in other ways, I am informed by an eye-witness that miscreants, who probably learned the trade in China or India, have established smoking dens in London, at which victims are intoxicated cheaper than with gin.

I have the honour to be, &c.,

R. ALEXANDER.

LETTER V.

THE ILLEGALITY OF THE OPIUM MONOPOLY, AND SUGGESTIONS FOR ITS SUPPRESSION.

My Lord,

The last point which I undertake to assert is, that not only is the opium traffic contraband in China, but that the opium monopoly in India is as contrary to the laws of this kingdom, as to the dictates of humanity, and every sound principle of international policy and commercial economy.

To maintain this proposition, I turn to the Act of Parliament 3 & 4 William IV, cap. 85, entitled "An Act for effecting an arrangement with the East India Company, and for the better government of His Majesty's Indian territories (28th August 1833,) by the third section of which is enacted, "that the exclusive right of trading with the dominions of the Emperor of China, and of trading in tea, continued to the said Company by the Act of the fifty-third year of King George the Third, shall cease."

Had legislation stopped here, it would have left no alternative but for obedience to be rendered according to the literal meaning of a positive command. But not only did Parliament enact that the exclusive right of trading with China should cease, it went on by the fourth section of the same Act further to prescribe, that "the said Company shall

with all convenient speed after the 22nd day of April 1834, close their commercial business and make sale of *all* their merchandise, stores and effects, at home and abroad, distinguished in their account books as commercial assets, and *all* their warehouses, lands, tenements, hereditaments, and property whatsoever, which may not be retained for the Government of the said territories, and get in all debts due to them on account of the commercial branch of their affairs, and reduce their commercial establishments as the same shall become necessary, and discontinue and abstain from *all* commercial business which shall not be incident to the closing of their actual concerns, and to the conversion into money of the property hereinto-before directed to be sold, or which shall not be carried on for the purposes of the said Government."

So fully in earnest was the mind of the nation upon this important question: so determined in its deliberate wisdom to put an end to the anomaly of a Sovereign power being engaged in speculations and unseemly competition with the interests of its subjects, that by Section VI. of the above-named Act, the Board of Control was authorised "to superintend, direct, and control the sale of the said merchandise, stores and effects, and other property herein-before directed to be sold, ... and the said Board shall and may appoint such officers as shall be necessary to attend upon the said Board during the winding up of the commercial business of the said Company."

Such was the law introduced by the Minister of the Crown to the House of Commons, carried through the Peers, and established by the concurrent authority of the three constitutional powers of the realm. Its purposes and provisions were so fully apprehended, that whatever fell under the vigilant observation of the people of this country, was, with legal promptitude carried into effect. The East India Company parted with the finest commercial navy the world had ever seen, and pensioned the officers of that department of their service: trade property was sold, accounts closed, and warehouses disposed of; the delegated sovereignty of the East was raised to its proper dignity, and commerce, relieved from the trammels in which it had been guided and restrained since the year 1600, appeared to have a fair field for free trade, to the reciprocal benefit of Great Britain, China, and our empire in India. Parliament and people, happy in this as in other instances, to think that an important question had been satisfactorily settled, confided in the obedient integrity of the executive authorities, and turned their attention to other subjects. That this national confidence has not been justified is manifest in the fact, that though the East India Company relinquished trade in tea, and all that was deemed competitive in England, they illegally retained two monopolies by which free trade and production were most effectually repressed abroad. By the salt monopoly, the use of one of the principal supports of human existence is restricted in quantity and enhanced in price to 150,000,000 of

our Indian fellow subjects; and by the monopoly of opium, a poisonous drug is cultivated for, and sold by, the East India Company, for the purpose of so "exclusively trading with the dominions of the Emperor of China," that no other opium shall be brought into competition.

It is also to be remarked, that although under the 33rd George III, cap. 52, sec. cxxxvi, the inland trade in salt, beetle nut, tobacco, and rice, was granted to the East India Company, that of opium was not included—by what right, therefore, the local Government maintained the odious monopoly of this drug, or continued that of salt, after the Act 3 & 4 of William IV, cap. 85, was passed; is not to be discovered by a perusal of the laws under which India is, or should be, governed. All that appears by them is, that of the two monopolies now in existence, that of opium was never granted by the law of this country, and both it and the monopoly of salt have been exercised with more intense illegality since the year 1834, when the present corporation ceased to be "the United Company of Merchants trading to the East Indies," and by virtue of Sect. cxi, 3 & 4 William IV, cap. 85, became the "East India Company" without either commercial charter, rights, privileges, or designation.

If ambiguities were to be recognised in Acts of Parliament, I confess that one might be suspected in the concluding words of Sect. iv, 3 & 4 William IV, cap. 85. To show, however, that "the purposes of Government" there meant, are only such as might be

lawfully carried on after the cessation of *all* trade and the closing of *all* commercial accounts, reference may be made to the explanatory note in the margin of the Act, which, though not of judicial authority, may in all fairness be taken to express the mind of Parliament, as understood by the House and its own officers, in these words, "Company to close their commercial business, and to sell their property not retained for Government;" this obvious meaning is borne out by the evident necessity of so far qualifying the preceding part of the section, as to enable the Company to retain unsold their house in Leadenhall Street, and the various Government houses, public offices, and depots, which every State must possess for transaction of its business, safe keeping of clothing and arms for troops, ordnance material, provisions, and grain.

It is only on the supposition that the East India Company must have something to adduce in extenuation of their flagrant violation of the laws of their country, and because I cannot discover any other passage in the Acts of Parliament that could be used as a peg on which to hang a plausibility in explanation of their conduct, that I enter so fully upon what might otherwise appear unworthy of argument. Let me, however, if possible, exhaust the subject.

My argument is strengthened by the 5th section of the above-named Act of William IV, which provides that "the Company may sell at the sales of their own goods and merchandise by this Act described, or authorised to be sold, such goods and merchandise

the property of other persons, as they may now lawfully sell at their public sales." By section 4, no commercial business, and consequently no sales, are permitted to the Company except for the purpose of winding up their trading business: by section 5, they may sell at such sales, but at no others, the goods of other persons: therefore, even though opium should be incidentally included in this permission, it is plainly only allowable to sell it at such sales as are authorised by the Act itself—whereas it is a patent fact that the sales of opium are a distinct thing, and in no way connected with the sale of any other merchandize.

But admitting, merely on behalf of the East India Company, that a British Parliament could have been so lost to all feelings of legislative dignity, as purposely to have left open a door for opium smuggling to be driven through its Act, the futility of such proceeding is palpable to every mind acquainted with the fundamental principle of our common law, that nothing can be recognised as legitimate which is contrary to reason and religion. That the opium traffic is under every aspect and in every incident contrary to both, is simply proved by the monopoly in India being arbitrary and impolitic, and the trade in China contraband, carried on against the known laws of the empire, and deeply dyed with the blood of its victims and opponents. Reason and religion alike condemn its existence and its crime, and both are happily combined in the dicta of the great commentator on our laws. In Vol. I, of Blackstone,

and in the third section, which treats of "The Laws of England," we find among the rules given for the construction of Statutes, that "One part of a Statute must be so construed by another, that the whole may (if possible) stand: *ut res magis valeat, quam pereat.*" We find also these words: "Lastly, Acts of Parliament that are impossible are no validity; and if there arise out of them collaterally any absurd consequences, manifestly contradictory to common reason, they are, with regard to these collateral consequences, void. . . . . . Where some collateral matter arises out of the general words, and happens to be unreasonable, then the judges are in decency to conclude that this consequence was not foreseen by Parliament; and therefore they are at liberty to expound the statute by equity, and only *quoad hoc* disregard it." Now, to such a construing of our laws, I gladly commit the few concluding words of the section of our Act of Parliament, well assured by common reason, and every idea of decency, that it was not foreseen by Parliament, that an Act for the cessation of legal commerce was to convey either sanction or authority for the most outrageous contrabandism by which humanity has ever been disgraced.

The limits of a pamphlet oblige me to omit from these letters much that I desire to bring to the knowledge and consideration of its readers, who yet require to be informed of the atrocities of the opium trade in Cochin China, Siam, Borneo, Sumatra, and on the coasts and islands of the Malay peninsula; of the demoralization that follows upon the gambling and *respondentia* transactions connected with Government

sales in Calcutta, and opium speculations at Bombay, as ruinous to individuals as are, in this country, the risks upon horse racing to the victims of the turf. I could bring forward much more evidence from our Parliamentary Blue Books, and also show to my countrymen how such distinguished men as the Count de Montalembert* and other French and American writers hold up to the reprobation of mankind a traffic, the opprobrium of which is attached to our nation by the suicidal impolicy of the East India Company and the oversight or connivance of a Minister of the Crown.

But it may, and I presume it will, be asked, what is the East India Company to do for the revenue derived from this source? I might answer, Let the merchants and Parliament of Great Britain answer that question; or, taking a higher ground, point to an example in our Bibles, recorded in the Second Book of Chronicles, xxv. 9,—"And Amaziah said, But what shall we do for the two hundred talents? And the man of God answered, The Lord is able to give thee much more than this." On the authority of parties interested in the present system, *i. e.* opium agents, whose writings I have before me, I find that the poppy requires the richest lands in India for its cultivation, and is a plant of extreme delicacy, and liable to injury in many ways from variations of temperature, changes of wind, a greater or less quantity of dew, and other frequently occurring causes. The soil best suited for its growth is the best adapted for the richest productions of

* "The Political Future of England," by Count de Montalembert, p. 219.

the East,—such as sugar, cotton, indigo, and others, for which this country can give her manufactures in exchange. Why, my Lord, it seems to be an insult to the administrative wisdom and moral feelings of our nation to entertain for a moment such a supposition, as that in the undeveloped resources of the richest portion of the globe, inhabited by upwards of 150,000,000 intelligent subjects of our gracious Sovereign, there are not sufficient means of raising revenue* without having recourse to an expedient as degrading as it is uncertain. By such political economy we are exposed, not only to the contempt of true statesmen and philanthropists, but to that righteous retribution which both Divine Revelation and the whole history of mankind show to be inextricably involved in every unholy system based upon false principles. The East India Company appear blind to the dangerous precariousness of the profits upon which they rely, and to the fact that with the growth of their monopoly has also grown the impending element of its destruction, either by success of the demand now made in the name of justice and humanity for the abolition of opium smuggling, or by the eventually certain climax of its perishing under the weight and consequences of accumulated misery and crime.

Let, however, the East India Company diminish its advances for poppy cultivation by twenty or twenty-five per cent per annum, maintaining its own

* See on this important subject Colonel Arthur Cotton's pamphlet, published by Richardson & Co., "Profits on British Capital expended on Indian Public Works;" also that officer's and Mr. Bourne's pamphlets, "Public Works in India."

imposed restrictions upon the growth, and in a few years there would not be produced more than sufficient opium for the purposes of legal trade and justifiable uses. Their government would thus free itself from the odium of an illegal and impolitic monopoly; and, acting in accordance with the right principle, which I quoted from a paper of their own publication, would afford opportunity for private capital to be employed in those districts from whence monopoly excludes competition, and where the wealth of the Government Treasury excites an unnatural development; in the ordinary course of events, this would soon subside, and the legal cultivation and trade in opium fall to their level in the relative value and importance of sound commercial enterprise. Most deeply are our manufacturers and merchants interested in this question; for there is not a poppy field in which cotton might not be grown, nor a chest of opium provided in India that does not render Manchester and the trading cities and towns of Great Britain more dependent upon the American market for slave produce from the shores of the Mississippi.

One sentence, my Lord, from a despatch of the East India Company, would, if acted upon in sincerity, settle the whole question:—

"WERE IT POSSIBLE TO PREVENT THE USE OF THE DRUG ALTOGETHER, EXCEPT STRICTLY FOR THE PURPOSE OF MEDICINE, WE WOULD GLADLY DO IT IN COMPASSION TO MANKIND."

I have the honour to be,

Your Lordship's most obedient Servant,

London Nov. 1856. R. ALEXANDER.